

## Board considers renovating or replacing Argentine library

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Days after a library opened in the Turner neighborhood, another library in Kansas City, Kan., may receive an upgrade - or a new facility - in the future.

On Tuesday at the KCK Board of Education meeting, two plans were outlined for the future of the Argentine branch of the KCK Public Library.

Located at 2800 Metropolitan in KCK, the historic Carnegie library building began operating at that location in 1917. The size of the library is 7,500 square feet and holds over 90,000 items.



The Kansas City, Kan., Board of Education is considering either renovating the 90-year-old Argentine Branch Library or building a new one. The historic building is the last remaining Carnegie Library in the Kansas City metro area. **Kansan photo by NICK SLOAN**

One plan would call for a renovation of the library, adding a second story and remodeling an additional 7,000 square feet. Under the plan, renovation would cost just over \$8 million, with the costs of building the second story \$250 per square foot, and the renovation at \$50 per square foot. The costs would include parking, design and construction contingency, furniture and equipment fees and other fees.

A second plan calls for a new 30,000 square foot, two-story library. The plan's cost is just over \$9.8 million after calculating the cost of \$250 for each square foot of the facility. Additional costs would be associated for parking and supplies.

Charles Perdue, director of libraries for the district, said the current Argentine Library branch offers a number of obstacles for patrons.

"Anyone walking into the library can see it is too small," he said. "If you compare it to services at other branches, it's just an uneven service there."

Both plans would quadruple the size of the facility.

Other issues Perdue pointed out include the lack of accessibility for the handicapped and elderly residents in the surrounding neighborhood.

But there may be more obstacles in actually renovating the library.

The building is the only remaining Carnegie library in the Kansas City metropolitan area. It's also a historic landmark in KCK and has been placed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places and the National Register of Historic Places.

The Argentine Library was one of over 2,500 libraries built using donations from Andrew Carnegie, a prominent businessman in the 19th century. From the late 19th century into the early 20th century, Carnegie built a fortune in the steel business.

Carnegie funded nearly 1,700 libraries in the United States, about 650 in the British Isles and 150 in Canada, as well as others across the world.

Because of its distinction, the possibility of renovation becomes more difficult.

"There are strict limitations for what we can do to expand it," Perdue said. "It's not easily added to."

Like the current library's facility, space would be an issue in renovation.

Surrounding the library is Emerson Elementary School, as well as a community center and playground.

"The issues with expanding the building is there are a lot of things around the building," he said. "It's just really hard."

The latest discussions surrounding the renovation are not exactly new. A community group featuring members from the surrounding community and district officials was previously formed to develop a plan concerning the future of the Argentine library.

The KCK Board of Education, while not officially approving either plan Tuesday, suggested the district to approach community leaders with both plans.

Cynthia Lane, assistant superintendent for business and instructional support services, said at the meeting the district would continue working with the committee.

"They have expressed interest in a new facility," Lane said.

A meeting will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 27, at Emerson on future planning for the library.