

# Scenic Regional revives plans for Alco building

Scenic Regional Library officials have resurrected a \$1 million-plus expansion project that seeks to move the Hermann branch to a new location in the city by the end of 2022.

At their Aug. 25 meeting, the Scenic Regional Library Board of Trustees voted unanimously to move ahead on plans for a new facility in Hermann, to be located in the former Alco store building. On Friday, Library Director Steve Campbell told the Advertiser-Courier that while the current branch does not have any mold whatsoever, there is mold in the former department store that must be removed.

In February, the Library Board selected Horn Architects in Washington to design the facility. However, the contract was tabled twice (in March and June) due to the library's uncertain finances in 2021, linked to the pandemic. The contract with Horn was approved at the board's August meeting. In 2019, the library had purchased the 25,000-square-foot vacant

Alco building in the Bavarian Hills Shopping Center.

The library plans to convert approximately one-third of the building into the new library, while seeking tenants for the remaining space. The final design will be completed and presented to the Library Board for final approval in February.

Scenic Regional expects to begin construction on the project later in 2021. The Hermann facility will be the final component of the library system's \$22 million system-wide building project, which began in 2016. New -- or expanded and renovated -- facilities in Warrenton, Wright City, Owensville, New Haven, Pacific, Sullivan, and St. Clair were opened between May and September 2018. The new Union branch and administrative offices were opened in August 2019.

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The system currently has from \$1.4 to \$1.5 million in its budget for renovations to the new Hermann site. That figure includes the design fees, shelving, furniture, signage, and moving expenses. The Alco building was purchased for \$445,000.

On Friday, Campbell told the Advertiser-Courier about the reasons Scenic Regional is moving the Hermann branch.

"Over the past few years, we've completed a system-wide building project where we dramatically expanded the size of all our facilities," he said. "On average, we doubled the size of all our previous branches. Our former branches were very basic, essentially places to house books and other materials. Libraries have really evolved into more than that, especially with programming. We wanted facilities to reflect the way libraries have changed.

"All our new facilities feature outdoor spaces (shaded patios), study rooms, plenty of spaces for comfortable seating, dynamic children's areas with play spaces, and meeting rooms," Campbell added. "The meeting rooms provide space for library programming and also for public groups to meet."

Average usage has increased by about 30 percent, once the other revamped facilities reopened to patrons. Campbell said some branches have experienced up to 80 percent increased usage with the expansions.

"We want our Hermann branch to have all the same features as our other new facilities," he said.

The branch's size will nearly double from the current 4,100 square feet. It will have an outside patio, along with a large meeting and programming room that could take up close to 1,000 square feet. There will be at least one study room designed for two to three people.

The children's area will have several play features, including a giant 42"-touch-screen tablet loaded with literacy games and a LEGO/Tinker Toy table. There will also be more staff work space and storage.

"We're very excited to open this new, modern library facility in Hermann," said Campbell. "I'm personally eager to open the new branch by 2022, which will be the 50th anniversary of the Hermann Municipal Library joining Scenic Regional Library system in 1972."