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Dear Cheltenham Community,

The Cheltenham Township Library System and its Board would like to take an opportunity to provide important information regarding recent community discussions.

Both the Library System and its Board support Cheltenham Township's proposal for a central library with satellite facilities. We believe that this proposal provides significant benefits to the community and aligns with CTLS's facility priorities. We'd like to provide some background information explaining why the proposal aligns with the goal of creating a 21st century library system and continuing to provide a vital service to the township.

The Cheltenham Township Library System (CTLS) serves approximately 37,000 people and operates four (4) buildings across East Cheltenham (EC), Glenside (GL), LaMott (LM) and Elkins Park (EP). Through our physical collection of over 147,000 and digital items, including eBooks, audio recordings and downloadable/streaming movies, we provide essential services to the Cheltenham community.

In the fall of 2021, the CTLS embarked on a strategic planning process to "align its resources with the priorities of the community." As part of the process, we conducted community surveys, focus group discussions, stakeholder interviews, and a library user survey. Through various listening sessions with key community and business stakeholders, CTLS learned that there was a need for "placemaking" within Cheltenham Township.

With the library as a place maker, our Mission is to "meet evolving, diverse needs by being the place where everyone in the community can access resources, share ideas, connect, learn and grow." To ensure sustainability, one of the goals of our 2022-25 Strategic Plan is to "plan for library facilities that are sustainable and flexible to adapt to community needs."

CTLS cannot meet the determined needs of the Cheltenham community without reliable access to library facilities designed for supporting 21st century programming and materials. Our current library facilities that are owned by the Township, including the Glenside and Elkins Park library buildings, prevent our system from meeting the needs of the community. This is due to limited internal and external space, inflexible designs, out of date infrastructure, and general deterioration.

After attending all the listening sessions with the Township architects and residents, CTLS did a deep dive into 21st century library trends. Library users are looking for a wider collection of materials, they want to be creators using maker spaces, and they want a place where they can collaborate and experiment. We found that residents want access to technology, a sense of belonging and space for contemplation, work, and study.

Based on this collective information, CTLS and the Board recommend a modern, central library facility, designed to meet the needs of its users. Some of these features of a modern central library facility were identified through CTLS' strategic planning process and knowledge of current needs and future trends that may impact library buildings.

CTLS recognizes the tradition of four (4) walkable neighborhood libraries in the Township. Taking this into consideration CTLS and the Board recommend at least two small satellite libraries located withing existing Township facilities to provide specific high-need library services. Small satellite facilities would be a place where residents could pick up reserved materials, access and/or get technology help, print from computers, and may hold mobile shelves of popular bestsellers, children's items, and programming. The satellites would not require as many staff as the current branch locations.

EAST CHELTENHAM ■ ELKINS PARK ■ GLENSIDE ■ LA MOTT

www.cheltenhamlibraries.org

Although no final decisions have been made by the Township, CTLS and the Board thought it was important to share our facility priorities. Please review the attached one-pager that outlines some features of a 21st century library that CTLS supports. This one-pager will also be available for viewing in a poster form at Elkins Park and Glenside libraries.

Please contact Mary Kay Moran at ctlsdirector@mclinc.org if you have any questions or comments. We encourage community members to provide feedback to CTLS and the Board.

Sincerely,

Mary Kay Moran
Executive Director
Cheltenham Township Library System

Julie Haywood
President
Board of Library Directors of Cheltenham Township



FACILITY PRIORITIES AND NEEDS

WHAT DO WE WANT?

- Design and Construction of a New Primary Library to support a 21st Century Library System*
- Two small Satellite Locations to provide localized access to specific library services and materials

WHY?

- A modern, central library builds community and meets our 2022-25 Strategic Plan goal to plan for library facilities that are sustainable and flexible to adapt to community needs
- Meets the minimum expectations for a 21st century library building
- Provides a welcoming place for the community to access resources, share ideas, connect, learn, and grow

FEATURES OF A 21ST CENTURY LIBRARY?

- Large, flexible central space
- Multipurpose room
- Small conference/Study rooms**
- Program/Collection Spaces
- Reading areas/Comfortable user seating
- Teen Center with creative technologies area**
- Computer lab and coworking business areas**
- Makerspace/Digital lab/STEM lab**
- Early Literacy/School Readiness Play Center**
- Small Exhibit Space**

*A 21st century library is an information center that provides maximum satisfaction for the information needs of its users through the use of automated, virtual or digital methods. *www.igi-global.com* Libraries become a different kind of learning destination when reimagined as open, transparent spaces that invite communication and collaboration. *edutopia.org*

**Denotes a new request or enhancement.

Rendering courtesy of J.R. Keller