



Architect reveals \$16M library upgrade



Architect Andrew Berman unveiled the \$16 million plan to renovate the Montclair Public Library and the Bellevue Avenue Branch Library on March 29.

Photo/Jaimie Winters

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New York-based architect Andrew Berman unveiled the \$16 million plan to renovate the Montclair Public Library and the Bellevue Avenue Branch Library that would bring the community centers into the 21st century.

Plans, revealed on March 29, include updating the exteriors with more glass to bring in natural light, adding an extension to the third floor of the main library, a large extension to the Bellevue Library, the addition of a grand staircase to the main library, and ridding the libraries of stacks to give way to large, open public spaces while providing more classrooms and private study areas.



Plans call for the entrance to be moved and a plaza to be installed out front.

Andrew Berman/ Rendering

“With this [plan] we are creating more space for programming and people ...and light. The space will be more flexible,” Berman said Thursday night.

Although book loans have not dropped, with digital cataloging book shelving can be curated more wisely to do away with stacks and thereby create more open space. Shelves will be located against walls with collections changing with the seasons.

“DVD loans have dropped,” Berman said. “Books have not, especially for children.”



*A grand spiral staircase would be added.
Andrew Berman/ Rendering*

Main Library

Plans for the main library branch on South Fullerton Avenue include the following, at an estimated cost of \$10.4 million:

- Moving the main entrance to the left, adding floor-to-ceiling windows on all three levels and creating an outdoor plaza to the right of the building;
- A new grand staircase to access all floors, while keeping the original stairwell;
- An expansion of the auditorium into the hallway;
- Large public spaces on each floor;
- Glazed front windows covering all floors;
- An outdoor walled-in terrace area accessible through the library only;
- The addition of approximately 6 classrooms and a STEM room; and
- An option to expand the third floor to include a teen area with music and quiet rooms at \$1,775,000;

Additional costs include \$240,000 for parking and landscaping site work, \$580,000 for roofing, \$625,000 window replacement and \$300,000 for the patio.



*At the Bellevue Branch, an addition would almost double the space.
Andrew Berman/ Rendering*

Bellevue Library

The Bellevue plans call for more modest renovations totaling \$680,000, not including \$250,000 for parking and landscape site work and \$2.2 million for the addition.

“It’s a lovely building and does not need a radical reinvention,” said Berman.

Bellevue highlights include:

- A glass addition slightly smaller than the original building in size;
- Adding another entrance with the addition;
- A large public space and classroom on the first level;
- An option to create a teen area and more children programming space;
- Two classrooms and two ADA bathrooms on the lower level; and
- An elevator

The Library Board stressed the plans are preliminary. Funding is still being discussed, but would come from

state allocations and municipal funds.



*Both libraries would be given more open space and light.
Andrew Berman/ Rendering*

History

The Bellevue branch was built in 1914 with \$80,000 of the funding coming from the Carnegie Corporation. It underwent a renovation in 1985, closing for eight months.

The main branch was built 1955 on land and with funds of \$250,000 donated by the Davella Mills Foundation. The total cost was \$800,000. In 1996, the library was renovated, relocating to the YWCA for a year. The renovations included the auditorium, cafe, art gallery and third floor children's area. The library is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.

Andrew Berman

Andrew Berman is an architectural and cultural heritage preservationist in New York City and is known for his preservation work in Greenwich Village and the Meat Packing District.

"Andrew Berman Architect's work is defined by unique spaces and structures designed to resolve complex programs and sites," according to his company's website. "Each project is inextricably of its place. Each project speaks of its client, their culture, and programmatic needs. The building's construction is intrinsic to its meaning and presence, as well as its practical resolution. Materials are invested with purpose. They come alive in the light, and gain character over time through use and weathering."