

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY:

17. DO WE REALLY NEED A NEW LIBRARY?

The answer is a resounding “yes.” A library bond, passed in December of 1956, authorized the building of the current library which opened Jan 18, 1960. At the time, it was hoped that the building would meet the community’s needs for 20 years. It’s now served Abilene for over 60 years. By moving the library and utilizing new construction as well as the historic building, the library will have a centrally located facility that is easy to access with plenty of off-street parking.

In 2018, the Abilene Public Library hosted 531,865 patron visits. That is the equivalent of every man, woman, and child in Abilene visiting the library 4 times that year. The library is on track to exceed the 2018 visit totals, with 381,776 visits to the library in the first six months of 2019. In that same time 608,709 items have circulated.

That usage is in keeping with the national numbers that have shown remarkable growth. There are more public libraries in the United States than McDonald’s. (16,568 vs. 14,157)

18. DO PEOPLE STILL USE BOOKS?

A massive international study by the University of Nevada found the greatest single predictor of how far a child goes in school is how many books are in their home. Whether rich or poor, residents of the United States or another country, illiterate or college graduates, this study found that parents who have a large selection of books in the home increase the level of education their children will attain. Abilene can meet the same goal by providing a public library where books - and additional learning experiences for all children - are free.

19. WHAT WILL BE THE ADVANTAGES OF A NEW LIBRARY AT ABILENE HERITAGE SQUARE?

The new facility will be able to integrate the newest technology and will have room for library programing, including new options like a recording studio and the ability to check out computers, tools and equipment. Meeting rooms and private study areas will be available along with an adjacent coffee shop.



By locating at Abilene Heritage Square, the library will have the ability to utilize the auditorium and other project facilities. A well-known library consultant has been employed to help design the library with maximum flexibility so that the library can evolve to serve the people of Abilene for decades to come.

Just as happened downtown when the Paramount was renovated, it is anticipated that Abilene Heritage Square will spur investment in an area of Abilene needing re-development, that area of downtown Abilene south of the railroad.

20. WILL THE CITY OF ABILENE OPERATE THE NEW LIBRARY?

Yes.

21. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE “OLD LIBRARY”?

The city owns the building and will decide about its future use. There has been interest from some private investors, but no decision has been made at this point. It was also designed by the David Castle Firm and will hopefully find a new life.

QUESTIONS ON OPERATIONS:

22. HOW WILL THESE COSTS BE PAID?

The City of Abilene will lease the spaces occupied by the public library with a long-term lease to Abilene Heritage Square. In addition, Abilene Heritage Square will earn income from rental of the coffee shop, the auditorium and the Eagles Nest. Additional funding will come from special events and exhibits.

23. WHO WILL OWN THE PROPERTY AND BUILDINGS WHEN THE RENOVATION PROJECT IS COMPLETE?

The City of Abilene will transfer ownership of the old Abilene High School/Lincoln Middle School campus and buildings to Abilene Heritage Square, Inc., which will then own the property.



HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ABILENE HERITAGE SQUARE PROJECT?

Please visit the Abilene Heritage Square website at [www.abileneheritagesquare.org](http://www.abileneheritagesquare.org) and view the three-minute video that was presented to the Abilene City Council in September 2018.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Jane Beard
- Leroy Bolt
- Rhonda Bolt
- Melody Hunt
- Bill Minter
- Laura Moore
- Sam Vinson

BOARD MEMBERS

- Linda Barfield
- Mitch Barnett
- Katie Browning
- Susan Cannan
- Chet Caldwell
- Becky Colman
- Lynn Dickey
- Cary Etter
- Jordan Hibbs
- Betty Hukill

EX OFFICIO

- Cathy Lauve
- Sidney Levesque
- Marilyn Long
- Mari Kay Morrison
- David Pittman
- Kaye Price-Hawkins
- Eddy Smith
- Joe Spano
- Kathy Strong
- Taylor Sturgis
- Gail Thames

- Lori Grumet
- Ruby Perez
- Judith Phaneuf
- Rick Weatherl
- James Wagstaff

C O M I N G S O O N



ARCHITECT’S CONCEPTS

ABILENE HERITAGE SQUARE FAQ



# ABILENE HERITAGE SQUARE WILL BE AN INNOVATIVE LEARNING CENTER FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES.

## GENERAL QUESTIONS:

### 1. WHAT IS THE ABILENE HERITAGE SQUARE PROJECT?

Abilene Heritage Square is a redevelopment of the former Abilene High School/Lincoln Middle School buildings and campus. The historic 1923 academic building and 1929 gymnasium will be renovated, while preserving their historic facades. New construction sensitive to the historic structures will be added to the west side of the academic building, creating a contemporary learning center for Abilene.

### 2. WHAT WILL MAKE UP THIS CONTEMPORARY LEARNING CENTER?

Abilene Heritage Square will house the following facilities and organizations for the benefit of everyone in Abilene and the surrounding area:

- a state-of-the-art public library in newly constructed facilities
- the renovated 700-seat auditorium suitable for meetings, speakers, recitals, concerts and weddings
- an exhibit hall for both local and touring exhibits from major museums and galleries



- programming space for The Grace Museum, including a new Children’s Museum (in addition to the existing Children’s Museum)
- the renovated and highly versatile Eagle’s Nest gymnasium. It will be able to host events as varied as a school prom, square dance, civic club luncheon, craft show, family reunions, yoga classes, industrial exhibits, or wedding dinners. The facility will include a catering kitchen that allows catering service for up to 400 people seated at tables
- a coffee shop adjacent to the library that can be accessed outside library operating hours
- classrooms for the Stone Owl Academy, a program in which high school juniors and seniors can learn of constitutional principles and free-market economics while earning the Stone Owl Scholar designation and scholarship
- the “Lawn at the Square” suitable for outdoor concerts, festivals, and special events

### 3. DO ORGANIZATIONS MOVING INTO ABILENE HERITAGE SQUARE ALREADY HAVE OFFICES ELSEWHERE?

Yes. The Grace will continue in its current location and establish a satellite location at Abilene Heritage Square. The current downtown library will close when the new library at Abilene Heritage Square is opened.

### 4. IS THERE A FORMAL ORGANIZATION BEHIND ABILENE HERITAGE SQUARE?

Yes, Abilene Heritage Square, Inc. has been designated a 501(c)(3) charitable organization by the IRS, made official on September 8, 2017. Donations to the Abilene Heritage Square project are tax-deductible.

### 5. HOW AND WHEN DID THIS ORGANIZATION FORM?

A group of Abilene residents concerned over the fate of the old Abilene High School began

exploring possible uses for the school and began meeting soon after Lincoln Middle School closed. Eventually, after looking at 17 different options, the volunteers believed they had a workable plan and organized a Board of Directors (the members of which are found on the back of this brochure) and applied for nonprofit status with the State of Texas and the IRS.

### 6. IS THE ABILENE HERITAGE SQUARE PROJECT PRIMARILY FOR FORMER STUDENTS OF ABILENE HIGH?

No. The project will be a contemporary learning center open to everyone in Abilene and the surrounding area.

### 7. HOW WILL THIS PROJECT BENEFIT SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN?

As a contemporary learning center, Abilene Heritage Square will include a state-of-the-art children’s library that includes traditional library books as well as age-appropriate access to technology and computers. It will also offer specialized activities for various ages. Examples include LEGO® building, robotics, mystery writing, STEM projects, gaming and computer coding.

The facility will include a satellite children’s museum under the management of The Grace Museum. This new children’s museum will have a science focus, while the children’s museum at The Grace will focus on art and history. Children will also benefit from traveling exhibits, movies and special events in the auditorium. The lawn at Abilene Heritage Square will also be available to host activities for children for a wide variety of events such as outdoor concerts, holiday celebrations, games, and walk-through scale models of the solar system.

### 8. WILL THERE BE FEES FOR USE OF THE SPACES, SUCH AS FOR WEDDINGS OR REUNIONS?

Yes. And some exhibits and classes conducted by The Grace and the library may require the payment of fees.

## QUESTIONS ON PRESERVATION AND CONSTRUCTION:

### 9. HOW WAS THE ARCHITECTURAL FIRM FOR THE PROJECT SELECTED?

Abilene is blessed to have an architectural firm that has long specialized in restoration architecture. The Executive Committee of Abilene Heritage Square chose Weatherl and Associates to act as project architects based on their experience in restoration architecture and restoring The Grace, the Elks Building and the T&P Depot, Freight Building and Baggage Building as well as Old Main at McMurry. The preliminary concept drawings for Abilene Heritage Square have already won an award from the Texas Society of Architects.

### 10. WHY NOT JUST TEAR DOWN THE OLD SCHOOL AND START OVER WITH SOMETHING BRAND NEW?

On a very practical level, it would cost several million dollars to tear down the AHS buildings because they are so well built. However, from a broader standpoint, it’s important to restore old buildings because they give our community a sense of shared history. For over 90 years, the Abilene High buildings held and nurtured the future of Abilene. Generations of Abilenians share memories of the buildings and the events and life experiences they had while attending school there. Designed by renowned architect David Castle, the historic buildings of Abilene High are among the few local buildings of architectural significance.

### 11. IF THE CITY OF ABILENE OWNS THE PROPERTY, WHY DOESN’T THE CITY RENOVATE THE BUILDINGS?

For the city to renovate the property, the community would be required to vote for a bond

ARCHITECT’S CONCEPT



issue and the city would then have to borrow money. As a privately financed project, the city will benefit from the project but won’t borrow money for the renovation or commit taxpayers to pay for the project. As an added plus, privately financed construction is actually less expensive than construction projects undertaken by a governmental unit, so the project will be more cost-effective with Abilene Heritage Square assuming ownership of the property.

### 12. WHAT IS THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE ABILENE HERITAGE SQUARE PROJECT?

The estimated costs of renovation are \$41.5 million, which includes \$1.5 million in endowment to help fund the long-term maintenance costs of Abilene Heritage Square.

### 13. WHO WILL PAY THESE COSTS?

Abilene Heritage Square will be financed by private philanthropic foundation grants, gifts from individuals, families and companies, and governmental grants.

### 14. HOW WERE PREVIOUS HISTORICAL RESTORATION PROJECTS IN ABILENE FINANCED?

Several projects utilized private philanthropy coupled with tax credits and governmental grants. Other projects were done strictly through private philanthropy.

### 15. WHO WILL BE IN CHARGE OF THE RESTORATION/CONSTRUCTION?

The Board of Directors of Abilene Heritage Square will oversee all activities of this special project.

### 16. HOW LONG WILL CONSTRUCTION/ RENOVATION TAKE?

Approximately 3 years. The work will begin in the Fall of 2019 and is expected to be completed in time for the building’s centennial celebration in 2023-2024.