

## **Design team begins work on new Skaneateles Library**

Creating a welcoming, inspiring, sustainable new home  
for the community's library

SKANEATELES, NY - March 23, 2023 - The Skaneateles Library Board of Trustees has unanimously approved the hiring of an award-winning architectural firm for design of the new library at 75 Fennell Street, putting the project into a very real and exciting next phase.

The newly-hired team of Oudens Ello Architecture – a Boston-based firm that has designed beautiful libraries and other civic and cultural buildings in New York, Vermont, and Massachusetts – was on site the 2nd week of March to begin meeting with local partners. The library's building committee, which made the unanimous recommendation to the library board after an intensive six-month process, found Oudens Ello to be "aligned exactly with our vision," said David Hempson, building committee chair.

Library Board President Susanne Guske said the building committee "did a great job pulling together a comprehensive plan to find the right architects for this important community project. We are very excited to finally begin the process of designing a new library for our community."

She said Hempson was assisted by a very dedicated group of committee members from the community with a range of expertise, who "got into the weeds with us" to find the best fit. "We wanted the experience and a working relationship that a project of this magnitude deserves."

After an initial reach-out to 21 library-focused architectural firms, the committee reviewed 11 RFP responses, and invited four firms for in-person meetings in Skaneateles. Committee members then made trips to Ohio, Vermont, and Massachusetts to visit three finalist firms and to view at least two of each firms' libraries.

"We were very pleased with the caliber and experience of the candidate firms," said Guske, stressing that the three finalists were especially "terrific." In the end, she said "OEA seemed to be in a league of their own." The firm is "universally highly recognized."

OEA has done 15 public library projects since 2010, with four in progress now. Hempson said the broad range of references contacted for OEA were lavish in praise, which validated what the committee already saw in terms of talent, responsiveness, listening, and collaboration. "It was almost uncanny how Oudens Ello's design and interpretation of space aligned exactly with our vision," said Hempson. Library trustees, staff, and a team of community members on

library committees imagined a flexible, welcoming, and inspiring space that brings the outside in. This vision was then articulated and illustrated for the library by the local firm Three Needs Creative.

In his summary to the board, Hempson described “beautiful libraries with elements of surprise and delight,” that take advantage of natural light and provide spaces of civic scale and spaces with more intimate appeal.

Oudens Ello has extensive experience with net zero and sustainable libraries, which was an important criterion for the building committee, said Hempson. As architects committed to a sustainable future, they carefully consider the project’s impact on the natural environment with the belief that building green is an integral part of responsible design.

Library Director Nickie Marquis said 75 Fennell Street’s location along Skaneateles Creek, on the commercial corridor and nestled in the middle of residential neighborhoods provides a unique opportunity to create “a beautiful, sustainable building that preserves and celebrates green space.”

The next step is for Oudens Ello to create preliminary designs to be shared with the community, said Hempson. It will be helpful for potential donors to be able to envision the exciting possibilities, he said. Preliminary designs are expected by the end of June 2023, with final drawings expected by March of 2024.

The library is engaged in a capital campaign to raise the necessary funds and has recently passed its first major fundraising milestone. Private, grant, and foundation funding are all being pursued.

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