Looking Back: Library opened its South Main Street home 30 years ago

By Casey Roberts
Jessamine Journal

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Thirty years ago, Jessamine County's public library moved into a South Main Street building with nearly 2 1/2 times the space of its previous home.

The new Withers Memorial Public Library opened at 600 S. Main St. in September 1996. The 18,600-square-foot building provided 11,100 more square feet than the previous location.

The move followed a fundraising effort the board of trustees began in 1994, when the library again needed more room. It was the latest relocation for an institution whose history stretched back a century.

Public library service in Jessamine County began in 1896, when the Acme Book Club assembled about 600 books, most donated by members.

A bequest from Sarah Rice Withers helped turn those early efforts into a permanent institution. Withers left $32,943 to trustees of Nicholasville Presbyterian Church to establish a public circulating library.

The trustees rented a ground-floor room at Maple and First streets, purchased about 1,200 additional books and hired a librarian and an assistant. Professional help was brought in to catalog the collection. The library operated six days a week.

Its first purpose-built home followed. Construction began in 1906 on a two-story brick building at Main and Oak streets. The library occupied the upper floor, while rooms below generated rental income. It opened July 22, 1907, and served readers for more than 60 years.

Later moves took the library to Second and Chestnut streets in the 1960s and then to Second and Maple streets in the mid-1970s. Those earlier locations formed part of the history recounted in an October 2014 Jessamine Journal column preserved on the Kaintuckeean history website.

The South Main Street building continued that pattern of finding more room as the library grew.

The years after the 1996 opening also brought investment in technology.

A grant record maintained by the Gates Foundation lists a $15,069 commitment to Withers Memorial Library in March 1999. Its stated purpose was to increase public access to computers and the internet.

The name changed in February 2001, when trustees voted to call the institution Jessamine County Public Library. Withers' name remained attached to the meeting room, renamed the Sarah Rice Withers Room.

Eventually, the South Main Street building needed another major expansion.

The 2014 newspaper column described the work involved in temporarily relocating the collection to Computrex Drive. A commercial moving company would wrap books in place on their shelves and transport the shelving units, avoiding the need to remove and reorganize every volume.



JESSAMINE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Withers Memorial Public Library at 600 S. Main St. is shown shortly after its completion in 1996. It became Jessamine County Public Library in 2001.

Books were only part of the job. The collection also included movies, music and video games — far different from the books that had filled the library's earliest rooms.

By 2016, the library was back on South Main Street after a $7 million expansion. Nicholasville's community report that year described a 41,000-square-foot facility with three times the meeting space and a children's library enlarged to about 6,000 square feet.

Ron Critchfield, the library's executive director at the time, explained in the report why the project had become necessary.

"Before the expansion, the shelves all over the library were packed to maximum capacity with little room for the addition of new materials," Critchfield said.

He also reported that heavily used meeting rooms had limited additional programming and left some community groups without space.

The expanded building included a recording studio, an enlarged computer lab and room for crafts. Teens received their own area with gaming equipment, laptops and tablets.

The city's report listed 600,000 annual checkouts and more than 800 programs, illustrating how much activity the South Main Street location was accommodating two decades after its original opening.

That summer, 2,753 people attended the preview party for the library's summer reading program, according to the report. Over six weeks, children turned in 4,040 reading logs.

In 2026, the library's services extend well beyond lending books.

The library's Creative Space now lists equipment including 3D printers, laser cutters, quilting machines and jewelry-making tools. Patrons must meet training and access requirements before using the space. These services give visitors opportunities to make something themselves as well as borrow something to take home.

Public Notices

Project Description:
The Jessamine County Business Center Phase 2 – Renovation Sitework and Interior Demolition project includes upgrades to the existing site storm sewer system, construction of a new retaining wall, and interior demolition of a substantial portion of the existing interior fit-up, including designated general construction, plumbing, HVAC, and electrical components.

Bid Date:
Trace Creek Construction, Inc. will receive bids for the Jessamine County Business Center Phase 2 – Renovation Sitework and Interior Demolition on **Thursday, November 19, 2026 by 2:00 p.m. ET / 1:00 p.m. CT.** Bid opening will be held at the Jessamine County Courthouse in the County Judge's office located at 101 North Main Street, Nicholasville, KY 40356. All bids received prior to the closing time will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late bids shall not be acknowledged and will be returned unopened to the contractor. The bids shall be guaranteed for a period of sixty days and no bid may be withdrawn prior to the sixty-day period.

A Pre-Bid meeting will be held on **Tuesday, November 10, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. ET / 9:00 a.m. CT** at the Jessamine County Business Center located at 315 North 2nd Street Nicholasville, KY 40361. Attendance at the Pre-Bid is highly recommended but not mandatory. A thorough investigation of the site and existing structures is strongly encouraged for all bidders. The existing property is located at 315 North 2nd Street, Nicholasville, KY 40361.

Form of Proposal:
The official form of proposal is included within Volume One (1) of the official specification manual. The forms supplied within the specification manual shall be completely filled out and submitted within a sealed envelope. The form of proposal shall be copied from the specification manual. The exterior of the sealed envelope shall contain the following information:

Bid Guarantee:
A 5% bid bond or certified check equal to 5% of the bid, including all alternates, is required to be submitted with the official form of proposal.

A 100% performance and payment bond shall be provided for the full base bid amount plus any accepted bid alternate(s), upon receipt of a Notice of Award.

METHOD OF BIDDING:
Bids will be received from Individual Trade Package Contractors on a Lump Sum Bid Basis for the Individual Trade Bid Package as described herein. All phases of the work described and outlined within the Individual Trade Bid Packages will be completed by the successful Individual Trade Bid Package Contractor. Bids shall be submitted in the manner herein described and on the official proposal form included with the general conditions and specifications and shall be subject to all the conditions as set forth and described in the Bid Documents.

METHOD OF AWARD:
Award shall be issued on the best value responsive bid by a responsible Bidder as determined by Trace Creek Construction, Inc., provided the Bid has been submitted in accordance with the requirements of the Bidding Documents.

PROJECT CONTACTS:
The following shall be the official contact list for the project. All communication and clarification concerning the bidding documents shall be forwarded through the contacts listed below. All correspondence and questions shall be copied to the Construction Managers and the Architect's office by email:

Construction Manager: Trace Creek Construction, Inc.
Travis Curry, Senior Project Manager
Office: (606) 796-3867
Cell: (606) 202-0413
Email: tcurry@tracecreek.net

Architect: CMW, Inc.
Bill Pickering, Principal
Office: (859) 254-6623
Email: bpickering@cmwaec.com

Bidding Documents:
Bidding Documents will be on file and available for review at the following locations:

1. Architect: 249 East Main Street, Suite 100, Lexington, KY 40507
2. CM: 127 Market Street, Vanceburg, KY 41179
3. Lynn Imaging: 328 E. Vine Street, Lexington, KY 40508. Lynn Imaging will be in charge of plan distribution. Plan purchase charges will be listed on the Lynn Imaging distribution website, https://www.lynnimaging.com/ Documents will be available for pickup/delivery after receipt of the specified payment by Lynn Imaging.

BID WITHDRAWAL:
No bidder may withdraw his bid for a period of sixty (60) days after the date set for the opening of bids. Clerical errors and omissions in the computation of the lump sum bid shall not be cause for withdrawal of bid without forfeiture of bid bond. Bids may be withdrawn in person only, prior to the closing date for receipt of bids. No additional cost will be considered due to tariff escalation cost after award of a contract.

Individual Trade Bid Packages Listing:

The following Individual Bid Packages will be accepted:

BID PACKAGE 01 Sitework
BID PACKAGE 02 Interior Demolition

Trace Creek Construction, Inc. reserves the right to accept and/or reject any bid deemed to be in the best interest of the Jessamine County Fiscal Court and Trace Creek Construction, Inc. in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

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Nov. 5, 2026
BIDS/PHASE 2

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Jessamine County-City of Wilmore Joint Board of Adjustment will meet in regular session at 6:30pm ET / 5:30pm CT, Thursday, November 19, 2026 in the second-floor courtroom of the Jessamine County Courthouse located at 101 North Main Street, Nicholasville, Kentucky. The agenda will be as follows:
Old Business
Case #CUP84 – Application for Conditional Use Permit to operate a Special Event Venue submitted by Timothy Lanter for property zoned A-1 at 1678 Little Hickman Road, Jessamine County, KY.
New Business
Case #CUP94 – Application for Conditional Use Permit to operate a Special Event Venue submitted by M 3 Family Investment LLC for property zoned A-1 at 5028 Ashgrove Road, Jessamine County, KY.
Other Business

Jessamine Journal:
Nov. 5, 2026
MEETING 11.19.26

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