



OWOSSO CARNEGIE LIBRARY PROPERTY COMMITTEE

July 23, 2026 at 6 PM at Owosso City Hall

Call to order:

Roll Call

Present:

Absent:

Agenda and Minutes:

Motion to approve July 23, 2026 agenda

Motion to approve June 25, 2026 meeting minutes

Agenda Items:

1. 17 Repurposed Carnegie Libraries in Michigan – Case Studies PRESENTATION

Public Comment

Member Comment

Next Meeting: August 27, 2026 @ 6 PM

Adjourn



OWOSSO CARNEGIE LIBRARY PROPERTY COMMITTEE

MINUTES FOR REGULAR MEETING OWOSSO CARNEGIE LIBRARY PROPERTY COMMITTEE June 25, 2026, at 6 PM at Owosso City Hall

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: at 6:02 PM

Roll Call

Present: Brewer, Wilson, Harrington, Ferweda, Cook, Horvath, Teich

Absent: None

Agenda and Minutes:

MOTION to approve the June 25, 2026 agenda made by HORVATH. SUPPORTED by HARRINGTON Motion carried.

MOTION to approve the May 28, 2026 meeting minutes made by HARRINGTON. SUPPORTED by BREWER. Motion carried.

Agenda Items:

1. Committee Questions from May 28 Meeting (INFORMATION)
 - a. Steam pipes: \$75,000 estimate was a rough figure; system is patched and functional. Capital item removed since the library intends to vacate; long-term the steam boiler will need full replacement.
 - b. Carnegie maintenance pledge: equates to ~\$2,000/year; City has far exceeded that historically (roof ~\$100K, A/C ~\$67–\$68K). Foundation no longer appears to actively check compliance.
 - c. Square footage: 4,000 sq ft above grade, plus ~4,000 sq ft basement (children's library); basement count depends on egress/zoning interpretation.
2. HDC Historic District Boundary Expansion (INFORMATION)
 - a. Committee favored Historic District inclusion over deed restrictions as the more effective, enforceable tool; deed restrictions seen as hard to enforce and potentially chilling to developers.
3. Parking Discussion with Adjacent Property Owner (INFORMATION)
 - a. Nathan outlined parking deficits for most use scenarios; only ~10 apartment units avoid a deficit. City has a variance process (used for Lincoln House) and may consider parking maximums as OHM updates the master plan.

- b. The committee raised a timing problem: use recommendations depend on adjacent parking availability. The Watkins green space parcel is separately deeded, which could ease acquisition.

Public Comment None.

Member Comment

The committee asked how to generate developer interest; Nathan and Justin said an RFP is premature until the funding gap is resolved and a timeline is set. Committee agreed to wait before marketing the property.

Nathan reported Owosso is now RRC-certified and has toured the MEDC rep through the Carnegie site as a priority property (\$35,000/year in technical assistance available). Committee would like the MEDC rep to present on July 23.

Venture Inc.'s investor campaign closed the old middle school funding gap; closing expected by year-end with construction starting early 2027 — freeing MEDC capacity to focus on Carnegie.

Justin Horvath flagged the pending Community Redevelopment Tax Credit (CRTC): a \$200M statewide pool. Bills are introduced in both chambers; Justin will send details to Nathan.

Action Items

- c. HDC: Nathan to recommend Council appoint the HDC as study committee to begin the survey process.
- d. Quiet title: Scott to proceed with the regular process after Council acts. Legal fees covered by General Fund.
- e. MEDC: Nathan to invite the MEDC rep – Nate Scramlin – to present July 23.
- f. Speaker: Nathan to line up a speaker from a community that repurposed a Carnegie library.
- g. CRTC: Justin to send legislation details to Nathan for the committee.

Next Meeting: July 23, 2026 @ 6 PM

Adjourned: at 6:39 PM



MICHIGAN'S REPURPOSED CARNEGIE LIBRARIES

Nineteen historic buildings, their stories, and what they became

Prepared for the Owosso Carnegie Library Committee | July 2026

The Carnegie Library Program in Michigan

61

libraries built in Michigan
from 53 Carnegie grants

\$1.66M

awarded by the Carnegie
Corporation, 1901–1918

~26

still operating as
public libraries today

~17

standing but repurposed
for new uses

Andrew Carnegie's terms were simple: the community provided a site and pledged annual public operating funds (typically 10% of the grant). **Local donors often supplied the land — which is exactly how Owosso's own building at 502 W. Main St. came to sit on land donated by the Owosso Casket Company in 1913.**

What Repurposed Michigan Carnegies Became



Museum (5)

Adrian, Cadillac, Houghton, Iron Mountain, Port Huron — historical societies as long-term stewards



Arts Center (4)

East Jordan, South Haven, Three Rivers, Traverse City — the strongest single pattern



Education / Gov't (2)

Lansing (LCC campus) & Sault Ste. Marie (school district offices)



Private Commercial (4)

Bay City (bank), Charlotte (law office), Niles (comedy club), St. Joseph (architects)



Private Residence (1)

Escanaba — sold and refurbished as a private residence



Community Service (1)

Detroit's Utley Branch — child care center on Woodward Ave.

Adrian



📍 110 E. Church St. **Now: Lenawee County Historical Museum**



- Built with a Carnegie grant in the early 1900s, the Adrian library served Lenawee County's seat for decades before the public library relocated to larger quarters.
- The building was preserved through conversion to a county historical museum, keeping it in continuous public and educational use.
- A common Michigan pattern: county historical societies stepping in as long-term stewards of Carnegie buildings.



Bay City

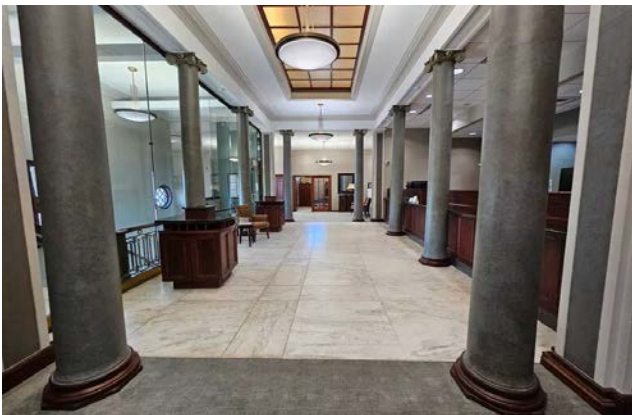


Private Commercial

📍 708 Center Ave. **Now: Bank branch & offices**



- Bay City's Carnegie building anchored the Center Avenue civic corridor, one of the state's grandest residential and institutional boulevards.
- After the library function moved on, the building was adapted for private commercial use as a bank branch and office space.
- An example of market-driven reuse: a well-built downtown landmark absorbed by the private sector without public subsidy.



Cadillac



📍 127 Beech St. **Now: Wexford County Historical Society Museum**



- In 1903 the Carnegie Foundation pledged \$15,000 contingent on matching funds, which the Cadillac Literary Society raised; the Classical Revival building (Scheurmann & Merriam, Saginaw) was completed in 1906 at a total cost of \$30,000 on land donated by Jacob and Wellington Cummer.
- Served as the public library until 1969, then housed the Cadillac Police Department for eight years. Facing demolition after police departed, the Wexford County Historical Society proposed a museum — the city accepted in 1977.
- Designated a Michigan State Historic Site (1980) and listed on the National Register (2007). The society began restoring the building to its original appearance in 1978.



Charlotte



Private Commercial

📍 200 N. Cochran Ave. **Now: Law office / small businesses**



- Charlotte's library dates to an 1894 half-mill levy; after years in rented rooms, local women's groups secured a Carnegie gift and the building opened in 1903 — a picturesque design with a round fieldstone tower, hipped roof, and fluted columns.
- By the 1980s the building lacked parking, accessibility, and space. The Charlotte Library Project formed in 1986, bought a former Felpausch grocery store, and opened the new library in 1994.
- The Carnegie building was sold for \$75,000 to become a law office; it now houses local businesses. A cautionary data point on sale price for a small-city Carnegie.



Detroit — Utley Branch

 Community Service

 8726 Woodward Ave. **Now: Family Place child care center**



- The Henry M. Utley Branch was one of several Detroit branch libraries built under Carnegie's multi-library grants to the city (Detroit received grants covering a main library and branches).
- After closure as a branch library, the Woodward Avenue building found new life as a child care center — continuing a community-serving function in a dense urban corridor.
- Detroit's branches illustrate the varied fates of big-city Carnegie buildings: some demolished, some vacant, some absorbed into neighborhood institutions.



East Jordan



📍 301 Main St. **Now: Jordan River Arts Council**

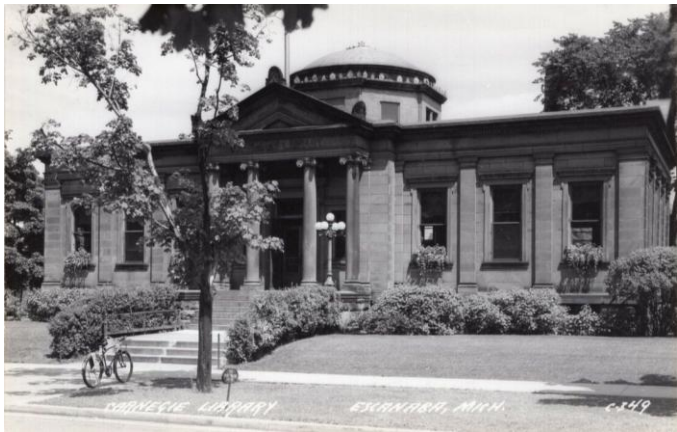


- East Jordan's Carnegie building sits downtown within sight of the south arm of Lake Charlevoix, near the community's historic ironworks.
- The Jordan River Arts Council owns the building outright and operates its nonprofit from the facility — hosting classes, workshops, exhibitions, and public events year-round.
- Council leadership cites a deep 'love of our old building' and dedication to its preservation — an example of full ownership transfer to a mission-driven nonprofit rather than a lease.

Escanaba

 Private Residence

 201 S. 7th St. **Now: Private residence**



- Built in 1903 with a \$20,000 Carnegie donation and designed by local architect Theodore Lohff in Classical Revival style — a portico with pediment on four Ionic columns; its low dome was removed in 1958.
- Designated a Michigan State Historic Site in 1976 and listed on the National Register in 1977. The city built a new city hall/library complex beginning in 1992; the library relocated in 1995.
- The Carnegie building was then sold to private owners who refurbished it for conversion to a private home — one of the few Michigan Carnegies to go fully residential.



Houghton



📍 105 Huron St. **Now: Carnegie Museum of the Keweenaw**



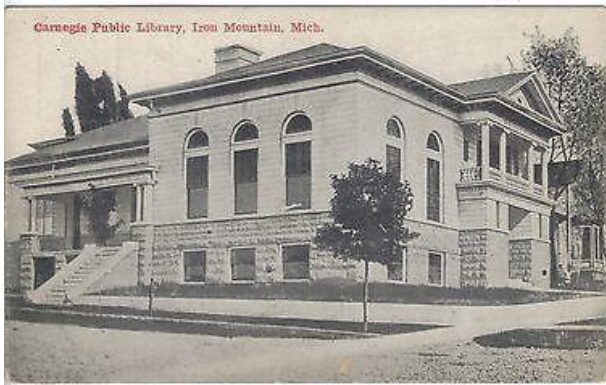
- Built 1909 with a \$15,000 Carnegie grant on the former Houghton Light Infantry armory site; opened as the public library in 1910. Classical Revival in red brick on a red Jacobsville stone base.
- Declared a Michigan State Historic Site in 1976; a contributing property in the Sheldon Avenue Historic District (NRHP, 1987).
- When the library relocated, the Carnegie Museum of the Keweenaw opened in the building in fall 2006, presenting changing local history exhibits. In October 2013 it was designated a Heritage Site of the Keweenaw National Historical Park.



Iron Mountain



📍 300 Ludington St. **Now: Menominee Range Museum**



- Visiting Iron Mountain on business in 1901, Carnegie personally saw the need for a library on the then-booming Menominee Iron Range and donated \$15,000. The Neoclassical Revival building (James E. Clancy) opened in 1902 — among the earliest Carnegies in Michigan.
- It served over 70 years until the Dickinson County Library system (est. 1961) outgrew it.
- In 1971 the Menominee Range Historical Foundation moved in and repurposed it as the Menominee Range Museum, showcasing regional history and artifacts while preserving the building.



Lansing

 210 W. Shiawassee St. **Now: Lansing Community College campus**



- Carnegie offered Lansing \$35,000 in 1902; voters approved by referendum, pledging \$3,500/year for maintenance. Designed by local architect Edwin A. Bowd, dedicated February 22, 1905, adjacent to old Central High School.
- By the late 1950s the building was too small, and its long entry staircase made it inaccessible to many residents. A new main library opened at 401 S. Capitol Ave. in 1964.
- Rather than sitting vacant, the building was absorbed into the campus of Lansing Community College (founded 1957, already operating on the same block) — continuing its educational role to this day. Michigan Historical Marker erected 2011.



Niles



Private Commercial

📍 321 E. Main St. **Now: Comedy club & speakeasy (in renovation)**



- Built 1902–04 in Classical Revival style with a \$15,000 Carnegie donation plus \$3,500 raised locally for the land; the Ladies' Library Association led the effort. Opened to the public November 17, 1904.
- A new library funded by philanthropist Jennie Plym opened in 1963, and the Carnegie building sat closed for more than 50 years.
- In 2022 the Niles City Council unanimously approved selling the building for \$100 to a local couple planning a comedy club ('Underground Laugh Lounge') and speakeasy — with the requirement that the exterior be historically preserved. A striking example of a nominal-price sale traded for private reinvestment.



Port Huron



📍 1115 6th St. **Now: Port Huron Museum of Arts & History**



- Opened May 26, 1904, financed by a \$40,000 Carnegie donation — keynote delivered by Melvil Dewey, creator of the Dewey Decimal System. Beaux-Arts Classicism by Port Huron architect George L. Harvey.
- In 1967 the library was reconstituted into the St. Clair County Library System and moved out; the Carnegie building was slated for demolition.
- Dedicated volunteers saved it, and the Museum of Arts & History opened its doors May 3, 1968. Listed on the National Register — one of Michigan's clearest 'rescued from the wrecking ball' Carnegie stories.



Sault Ste. Marie

 315 Armory Pl. **Now: EUP Intermediate School District offices**



- Michigan's oldest city received a \$30,000 Carnegie grant in 1901; the limestone Carnegie Public Library opened in 1905. Its entrance is flanked by Italian stone lions donated in 1906 by Chase S. Osborn — the local newspaperman who became Michigan's governor.
- The building expanded in 1940, but by 1966 space and modern requirements drove development of a new library facility.
- The historic building now houses the offices of the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District — a quiet, durable government reuse with no recorded title complications.

South Haven



📍 600 Phoenix St. **Now: South Haven Center for the Arts**



- South Haven's Carnegie building served the Lake Michigan resort town's library needs through most of the 20th century.
- When the library outgrew the building, it was converted to an arts center — now operating as the South Haven Center for the Arts with galleries, classes, and exhibitions.
- Part of the strong Michigan pattern of Carnegie-to-arts-center conversions (with East Jordan, Three Rivers, Traverse City, and Tecumseh).



St. Joseph



Private Commercial

📍 500 Main St. **Now: Allegretti Architects offices**



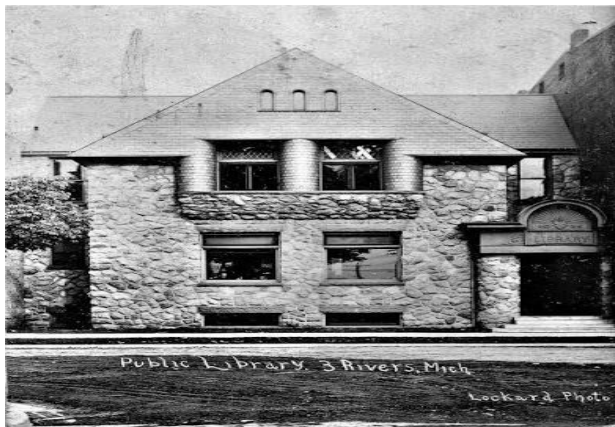
- Built 1903–04 on a city-donated corner lot with a Carnegie grant. Architect William A. Otis — Beaux-Arts trained — produced a delicate red brick neoclassical design whose concave corner entrance recalls John Soane's Bank of England, with fluted Ionic columns and a central interior skylight.
- The interior retains mahogany casework, dentiled cove moldings, and pilastered archways.
- In 1982 Allegretti Architects rehabilitated the building as its own offices — a design-sensitive private adaptive reuse by a firm with a professional stake in preservation quality.
- In the Summer of 2026, the Library will reopen as a boutique hotel after extensive interior remodeling.
 - <https://www.thelibraryhistorichotel.com/about-us>



Three Rivers



📍 107 N. Main St. **Now: Carnegie Center for the Arts / W.R. Monroe Museum**



- Built 1904 (A.W. Rush & Sons) with Carnegie funds on a lot donated by banker Warren J. Willets. Unusually Richardsonian rather than Beaux-Arts: pink granite fieldstone facades, red Lake Superior sandstone trim, lilac slate. Opened January 1905; the interior remains intact.
- In July 1978 the city moved the library out after engineers declared the building unsafe (fire and water-main damage to the north wall). The Three Rivers Woman's Club saved it from demolition, leasing it from the city in 1979 and restoring it; the Carnegie Center for the Arts opened April 27, 1980, and incorporated as a nonprofit in 1982.
- In 1992 two adjacent buildings were donated; a \$750,000 capital campaign (goal reached July 1996) joined all three, and the W.R. Monroe Museum opened June 1997. A model of phased, citizen-led rescue: lease first, ownership structure later, expansion when capacity allowed.

Traverse City



📍 322 6th St. **Now: History Center & Crooked Tree Arts Center**



- In 1902 Traverse City became the region's first Carnegie grant recipient — \$20,000, the largest in northern Michigan — with the standard conditions: \$2,000/year city maintenance and a donated site. Lumber baron Perry Hannah gave the Sixth Street site along the Boardman River; the library opened in early 1905.
- A 1960s addition added a children's department, but in the 1990s a citizens group pushed for a modern library; the Traverse Area District Library left for its new Woodmere building in December 1998, with no plan in place for the Carnegie.
- Concerned citizens kept the city-owned building in use — first as the History Center of Traverse City, and more recently as home to Crooked Tree Arts Center's Traverse City location as well. A case study in reuse evolving through successive tenants.

Lessons for Owosso's Carnegie Building

Arts & museum reuse dominates

The majority became arts centers or museums, usually with a historical society, arts council, or women's club as the driving nonprofit partner. A committed operating partner mattered more than the building type.

Phased rescue works

Three Rivers leased first (1979), incorporated a nonprofit (1982), then expanded (\$750K campaign, 1996). Traverse City evolved through successive tenants. Reuse doesn't have to be solved in one step.

Nominal-price sales trade cash for reinvestment

Niles sold for \$100 in 2022 with exterior preservation required; Charlotte sold for \$75,000 outright. The deal structure — not the price — determined the preservation outcome.