

Cold email to a local civic-minded intellectual

The library can become indispensable civic infrastructure-but only if it learns what residents actually value and builds for durable use rather than charitable appearance.

Subject: A durable case for the library

The library can become indispensable civic infrastructure-but only if it learns what residents actually value and builds for durable use rather than charitable appearance.

Jane Addams's Hull-House offers a useful discipline for that work. Its public kitchen attracted little interest, while its coffee-house and gymnasium became valued gathering places: social usefulness depended on cultural fit, not merely technical merit. The Settlement also paired neighborhood investigation with public bodies and outside organizations, turning local knowledge into durable civic action.

I'm developing a practical framework for helping our library observe, listen, test, and choose its role-without imposing a prewritten model or pretending every need belongs inside the institution.

Would you be open to a brief conversation about whether this could inform a durable funding or partnership strategy for the library?