

Book Lover Making Rumford Library Her Abode

East Providence Patch, by [Rob Borkowski](#) (Editor), January 07, 2014



Steele's dad and friend prepare the back wall of the Rumford Library for a new door. CREDIT: Rita Danielle Steele

Rumford Library, [sold by the city in July for \\$230,000 to Rita Danielle Steele](#) and George Potsidis of Providence, recently began a transformation into the new owner's private home.

Steele has begun chronicling the remodeling of the 108-year-old public space into her home on the [blog, rumfordlibraryproject.com](#). The bibliophile, recounting a struggle with her parents to store boxes of books, describes the purchase and renovation of the library as a dream come true.

Though the library's closing is a sad development, she said, she's happy, "... to at least maintain the feel of the building," Steele said.

Steele, a real estate developer and co-owner of [Geo Properties, Inc.](#) of Providence, has some experience in fixing up properties. She's been drawing on her professional skills during the project, which she started in November. "I'm able to do a lot of the work myself," she said.

Steele rented a home in Riverside for a few years before moving to Providence. She expects to become an East Providence resident again when she moves into the building March 15.

Steele grew up in Wellesley, MA, where she remembers a local library branch was the subject of a cost-cutting closure. "It just caused an uproar," she said. There didn't seem to be much of the same sort of protest from residents about the Rumford Library, she said.

That may have been a combination of the well-publicized dire straights East Providence found itself in under the [East Providence Budget Commission](#), and the strength of services provided at the city's remaining branches, said Library Director Eileen Socha. She said the closures (Fuller Library was also put up for sale and remains on the market), a result the need to make cuts at the direction of the

Budget Commission, weren't something she was happy to see occur on her watch. "It's never a good thing to close a library, no matter what," Socha said.

There were a number of people from both libraries' communities who were very upset about the closures, she said, but the sting was softened by the services at the city's remaining libraries.

With a population of a little under 50,000, Socha said, East Providence's two branches are still more than most communities its size enjoy. "We're fairly lucky in that," she said.

Given the necessity of having to close and sell off the Rumford branch, Socha said, they're lucky Steele is the one who bought it, wants to keep the architecture intact and is willing to share as she converts it. "I think it's great that the person who is re-doing the building is maintaining a blog," Socha said.

Steele said her new neighbors appear happy that she got the building, too. She said they've been very supportive of her remodeling efforts. "I really appreciate the welcome that the neighbors have extended to me," she said.

Steele said she'll be returning the welcome sometime in April with an open house fundraiser when she's finished, with the proceeds going to charity, perhaps one that supports literacy.