

BOOK IT

Fitchburg Public Library slated for \$40M expansion project

Improvements scheduled to begin later this year



The Fitchburg Public Library is set to undergo a \$40 million expansion and renovation, a project expected to start later this year. COURTESY MADORE PHOTOGRAPHY LLC

BY DANIELLE RAY

DRAY@SENTINELANDENTERPRISE.COM

FITCHBURG >> A “robust renovation and expansion” project at the Fitchburg Public Library is expected to begin later this year.

According to a press release the project is a continuation of the next phase of the city’s redevelopment of the Main Street corridor and will serve the city in new and traditional ways by providing a more flexible, welcoming, and sustainable public library facility.

“Public libraries are recognized as the most trusted of institutions and are a key resource for enabling people to work and learn more efficiently while narrowing the digital divide by providing essential computer and electronic resources,” Fitchburg Public Library Executive Director Deborah Hinkle said in the release. “The renovations and expansion will create an environment where programming for children, teens, and adults can take place simultaneously in a bright, comfortable, and safe space.”

The project will encompass two major changes — the renovation of the existing Wallace Building, built in 1967, and the creation of an entirely new and enlarged Youth Library and meeting room wing. It will expand the library’s offerings to include a Teen Room, a new Community Room to replace the current auditorium, several smaller meeting rooms, a Learning Lab, a Makerspace, improved access to the library collections, various seating areas throughout the building to study and engage, and more accessible, improved parking.

Funding for the \$40 million project will be provided through a variety of sources, including a \$12.5 million grant award from the Massachusetts Board of License Commissioners through the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program. Additional funding will come from a combination of \$12 million of the city’s American Rescue Plan Act funding and the city will provide \$12 million as part of the city’s capital budget, of which the library is included. The final \$3.5 million will be provided via an upcoming capital campaign.

“The Fitchburg Public Library is the centerpiece of Main Street providing free enrichment to our residents for generations,” Mayor Stephen DiNatale stated in the release. “This project is ambitious and essential to the future of our city as a learning and innovation hub while drawing people downtown and providing economic, social, and cultural benefits to enhance the quality of life for all in the city.”