

'BUILDING FOR THE PEOPLE'

# Fitchburg Library expansion scheduled to begin this year



One of the renderings of the expanded Fitchburg Public Library, expected to be completed in the summer of 2025. COURTESY FITCHBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY

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FITCHBURG >> The city will be moving forward this year on the Public Library expansion project after the construction timeline had been briefly delayed due to the discovery of a structural design issue.

As an effort to create a renewed community resource and destination for the next several decades, the library project is one of many large-scale projects that are revitalizing downtown Fitchburg at the moment.

According to Mayor Samantha Squailia, a structural design issue had delayed the start of the construction for the library but, despite that setback, the building project will break ground some time this year.

“The public library is the true ‘building for the people,’ and the city is committed to ensuring this central piece of community social infrastructure moves forward with a state-of-the-art library that benefits all people,” said Squailia. “We have worked through the design challenges on this major capital project with our design team, project managers, and city officials and will continue to work in close collaboration to oversee the project and ensure we remain within budget.”

The adjusted construction timeline is the result of delayed federal flood map approvals and revised design criteria, and a plan revision has been authorized to address those criteria while ensuring the new building meets all building code regulations.

Initially set at the summer of 2025, the expansion project is now looking at a 2026 completion date, according to Squailia. After resolving the issue, the city reports that the overall project remains within the budget approved by the city’s leaders and will not impact taxpayers.

While the delay may impact the construction timeline, it does not affect the services and programs at the Library, as a temporary location has been opened at 166 Boulder Drive.

“The library project is a multi-stage, multi-faceted project overseen by collaborators including the design team, project managers, library staff, the library board, and other city officials,” said Fitchburg Public Library Board of Trustees Chairman Matthew Bruun.

“Through this collaborative effort, we have identified a solid solution that will enable this transformative project to move forward despite a brief delay in breaking ground. The result will be a vital and inviting resource that enhances the entire community.”

The project encompasses two major changes, including the renovation of 29,700 square feet of the existing Wallace Building, which was first built in 1967, and the creation of an entirely new 25,000-square-foot youth library wing, with the new facility being 55,430 square feet total.

“Our team is working diligently to revise the plans, and we are confident the project will be completed in a manner that will enable the library to enhance its mission. This will be a building that inspires and stimulates generations of users, and we are both proud and humbled to play a role in bringing it to life,” said Jeff Hoover, project architect.

The library will offer a new community room to replace the current auditorium, several meeting rooms, a Learning Lab, a Makerspace, improved access to the library collection, various seating areas throughout the building to study and engage, and more accessible, improved parking.

“The Fitchburg Public Library holds a very special place in my childhood, in my heart, and in our community,” said City Council President Anthony Zarrella. “It’s not just a place to get books—it is a vital nucleus of civic and community involvement. I continue to look forward

to bringing my own daughter to enjoy a modernized and revitalized library, and the library will have all the support I can give to it."

The office of Fitchburg Mayor Samantha Squailia contributed to this report.