

Library renovation, construction project set to break ground

Variance granted by State; groundbreaking scheduled for Oct. 8



One rendering of the expanded Fitchburg Public Library, which will involve both renovations and new construction. COURTESY FITCHBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY

FITCHBURG >> In a transformative effort that will greatly improve a community resource and destination, the Fitchburg Public Library building project will celebrate the start of construction with an official groundbreaking ceremony on Oct. 8.

Clearing the last hurdle, the project was recently granted a variance from the state Board of Building Regulations and Standards and the Building Code Appeals Board. The state variance was required as a result of the delayed publication of federal flood map approvals and revised design criteria.

“A plan revision has been authorized to address those criteria while ensuring the new building meets all building code regulations,” said Deb Hinkle, director, Fitchburg Public Library. “While we were delayed starting our project, we now have a demolition permit in hand and the building permit is forthcoming.”

The variance received full support and was unanimously approved by the Massachusetts Building Code Appeals Board following a presentation to the board featuring an overview of the entire project by the library’s building project team.

In addition to securing the variance and required permits, temporary construction fencing has been installed at the 610 Main St. location, and removal of historically significant elements on the building have been completed. Abatement and demolition work will be the main activity before construction begins.

“In order to preserve and honor the original Youth Library building, a conservator removed many of the building’s historical components,” said Hinkle. “These elements will be preserved and reinstalled on the renovated and expanded facility.”

The project encompasses two major changes, including the renovation of the existing Wallace Library, which was first built in 1967, and the creation of an entirely new children’s space and community learning center. The library will offer a new community room, a variety of meeting and conference spaces, a learning computer lab, a Makerspace, improved access to the library collection, and various seating areas throughout the building to study and engage.

A groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 8, at 10 a.m., at 610 Main St. in Fitchburg, and will feature remarks from government and community leaders as well as members of the OWL (Offering a World of Learning) Capital Campaign. Members of the community are welcomed and encouraged to attend the ceremony.

— Fitchburg Public Library