



**ALMA**  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY

**NEW LIBRARY & COMMUNITY FACILITY**

**FAQs**

Updated February 4, 2025

### **Why do we need a new library?**

The foundations of the current library building are failing and would require an expensive retrofit within two years to remain occupiable. Without accessible parking and entry points or a second accessible exit, the current building does not provide equitable access or meet ADA or FEMA standards. Additionally, the library's collection has outgrown the space and no longer fits in accessible areas, and library usage has outgrown the space and cannot fully accommodate demand.

Thousands of people visit the library each year to access programs and materials, and its usage is growing. A new facility will provide the community with additional public resources and amenities, expand services the library is able to provide, and enhance our community's value and appeal.

### **How was the location determined?**

Several sites around Alma were considered, including three "downtown" locations, but only one of the available properties could accommodate a parking lot with accessible spaces and the single-story design required to keep maintenance and staffing requirements to a minimum. Alma Area Schools generously offered to donate a portion of the south end of their property that will meet all the project's needs.

### **Did you consider people who walk?**

We did! A transportation survey conducted at the library in May-June 2024 showed that most people currently drive to the library. Of 593 respondents, less than 1% said they walk, and almost all walkers reported that they have ready access to transportation to get to the new location. Proximity to school puts the new facility within walking distance of hundreds of children and youth, many of whom currently lack transportation to the library. More walkers are anticipated in the new location.

### **Won't a larger facility be more expensive to operate and maintain?**

The new facility is actually projected to cost less than the current library building to operate. Energy efficient elements such as solar power, geothermal heating, robust insulation, and sustainable design will significantly reduce utility costs. Minimal maintenance, upkeep, and staffing requirements are priority considerations in the design. The need for the community to raise approximately \$350,000 to \$600,000 on its own that would otherwise be required to retrofit the current, structurally failing building is avoided, and with donated land and construction costs covered by the grant, the need for a new mortgage is eliminated.

### **What about long-term upkeep?**

Alma City Council voted to create a Library Contingency Fund from a portion of proceeds from property sales to offset major future maintenance and equipment expenses, and energy rebate and other programs are being perused that are expected to bring hundreds of thousands of dollars back to the city coffers to offset upkeep costs.

### **How will we pay for the new construction?**

The building project is funded by a Flexible Facilities grant, administered through the Wisconsin Department of Administration, that was awarded to the City of Alma in October 2024.

### **Who made this decision? Was there a vote?**

Elected and appointed representatives of the City of Alma found the project to be in the community's best interest. It was approved by the library Board of Trustees and the city Finance Committee and Common Council in succession. All meetings were posted and open to the public, and all votes cast were unanimously in favor of the project. Since the grant deadline was on a tight timeline and the building project is not municipally funded or expected to raise taxes, no referendum was deemed necessary.

### **What efforts were/are being made to inform and involve the public?**

Efforts include/d newspaper articles, posted public open meetings, fact sheets, in-person visits, and an open house on February 13, 2025, inviting the public to meet the architects, view the preliminary designs, see an operational cost comparison estimate, ask questions, and leave feedback. Updates will continue via similar means, and a progress page is coming soon to the library's website.

### **Who is responsible for the project?**

The grant application was reviewed and approved by members of the library Board of Trustees and City Council and signed and submitted by Mayor Rick Champney. It was officially awarded to the City of Alma. Project management is included in the services provided by FEH Design, who were contracted by the city.

A Building Committee of five members, with one alternate, was appointed by Mayor Rick Champney and approved by City Council to assist the Common Council with project development. Four are members of the library Board of Trustees: Cindy Duley, Shelly Cherry, and Gary Wolf, with Andrea Goeldner as alternate. The other two are: Gary Jepsen, City Councilman and City Finance Committee Chairperson, and Laura Toone, Library Director. All contracts and major decisions are subject to approval by the City Council.

### **How will the new facility be relevant to me, even if I don't currently use the library?**

With additional rooms, faster internet, and expanded digital resources, the new facility will improve access to work, education, and healthcare monitoring in our area. Digitally equipped private rooms will enable telehealth, quiet study, tutoring, test proctoring, mentoring, and more. A meeting room, a large, reservable community room, a small multiuse amphitheater for numerous outdoor activities, and inviting spaces for children, youth, and adults will expand options for people of all ages to connect and gather.

### **How else will this project help our community?**

The project is projected to bring job opportunities and thousands of dollars to the community through lodging requirements, food and beverage services, and retail trade. Local contractors will be invited to bid on the project. Once completed, it will provide amenities currently unavailable in the region that will help retain and attract people to our community, bolster local businesses, and enhance our quality of life.

### **What's the timeframe?**

Groundbreaking is expected in June 2025, with project completion in October 2026.

### **Whom should I contact if I have more questions?**

For questions regarding city decisions or financial impact, please contact Councilman Gary Jepsen.