

Library & City Hall Remodel

Committee of the Whole
July 21, 2026

WAUWATOSA
PUBLIC
LIBRARY
Illuminate your world



OUTLINE

- Public engagement summary
 - Website survey results
 - Themes of comments
 - Common questions and answers
- Library Board recommendation
- History of Common Council decisions
- Pros and cons of options
- Finance details
- What happens next?



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Events

- State of the City
- Firefly Grove Park Friday
- Tabling at the library
- Senior Planet
- Teen event
- Farmer's market

Postcard

- Sent to all Wauwatosa residences (~23,000)
- We tracked the QR code. Over 465 people used the QR code to access the project webpage

Digital

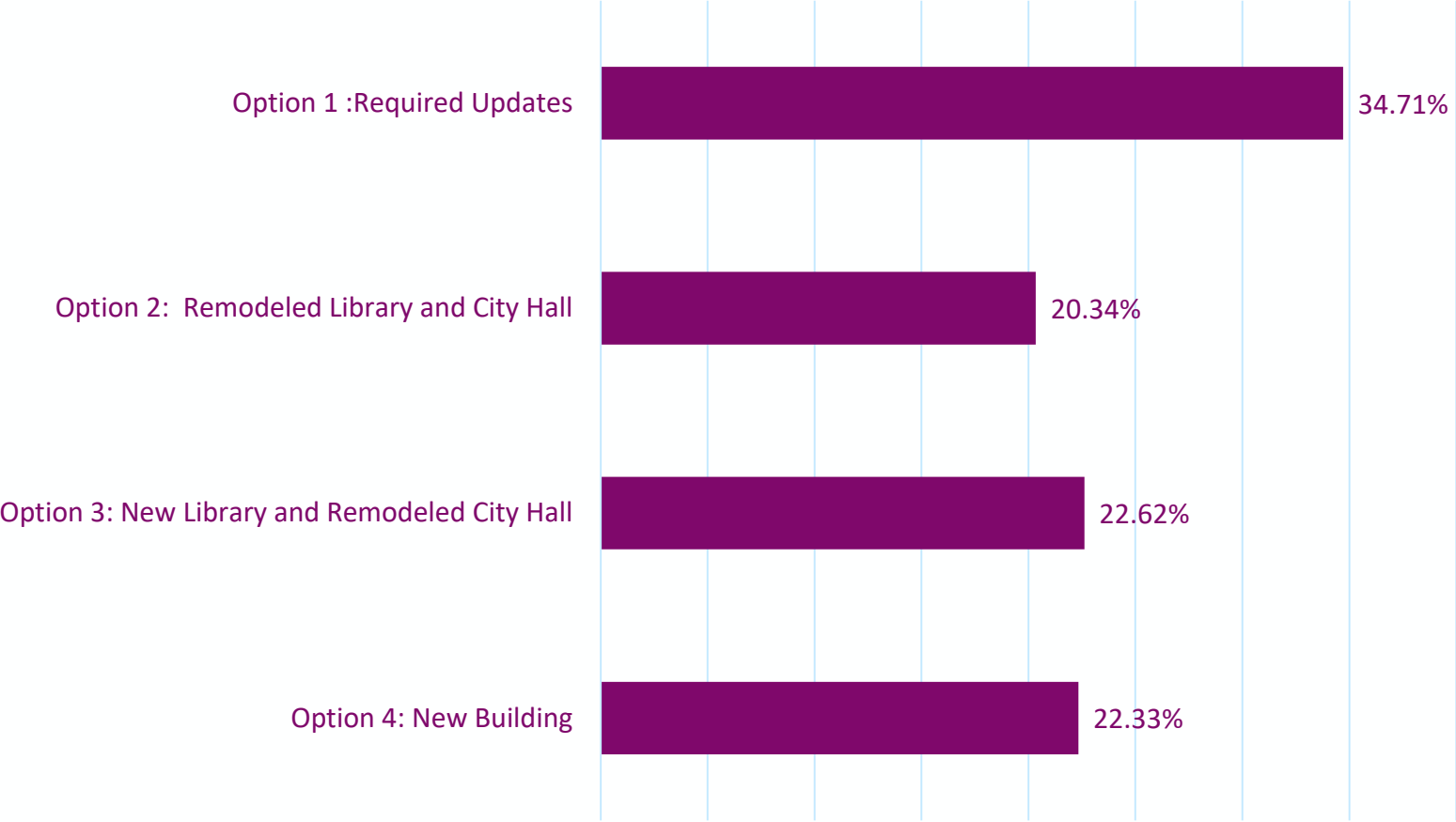
- Social media, city website, News in Brief
- Project webpage: engage.wauwatosa.net/library-and-city-hall-remodel



Webpage Survey Results

- 5,785 webpage views
- 1,397 respondents
 - 95% residents / 5% non-residents
- 52 questions submitted on project webpage
 - (several more through social media or in person)

Community’s Preference for Remodel Options



Theme: Concern about Taxes

Concern regarding taxes:

“There is no need for this project. What Wauwatosa really needs to do is improve our roads. Many of our main roads need attention. Please invest in something that benefits the whole community.”

“The library is well used and well loved as is. The increases in taxes from the home valuation assessment and school board referendums is too much. We cannot afford more additional tax charges. Option 1 seems the most responsible.”

“I believe Option 3 is optimal as it provides for the future without putting undue strain on the taxpayers. I use the library weekly whereas the average person's use of City Hall is minimal.”





Theme: Community Support for Library Modernization

Acknowledgement and excitement about investing in the building, particularly the library.

“Libraries are important to the growth and well being of a populace. A renovation would be satisfactory but maybe a whole new building would serve our community better.”

“Please include plenty of quiet study/work rooms. When I go to library now, they are nearly always full.”



Theme: Traffic Safety / Activating North Avenue Entrance

Several comments about traffic safety and improving the pedestrian experience:

“I'm excited!! As a library super user I'm looking forward to it. I hope that whatever is decided - pedestrian access needs to be MAJORLY improved. Both walking and biking to the library at the moment are treated as an afterthought, and not given the prominence that they deserve!!!”

“Public spaces are important in attracting residents. What I don't see is a plan to address the likely mess that will be 76th and North if a specialty food retailer moves in by BMO? Also, how does this work based on the potential for changes at Longfellow Middle school?”

Common Questions

- Why is there not a “do nothing” option?
- Are the renderings representative of the final design?
- What would happen to the library during construction?
- Would the city consider a private/public partnership? (housing or commercial mixed with the city building)

Please see handout in back of room for written answers.
The handout is also attached in the meeting portal for virtual attendees.



Library Board Recommendation

“The library board believes options three and four offer a fundamentally better long-term solution than remodeling the existing library and city hall. Rather than fitting library services into a constrained building configuration, a new library can be intentionally designed around how libraries serve their communities today and into the future.

An efficient, purpose-built layout will better support collections, programming, technology, study and meeting spaces, and the needs of the more than 1,000 people who use WPL each day. The library board believes this approach will allow WPL to operate more effectively and efficiently while providing the welcoming, functional spaces our community expects and deserves.”



Common Council Decisions Which Informed Designs

- Not pursuing housing on the site (2016 and 2017 studies and decisions)
- Advancing sustainable measures in cost-effective ways (Common Council resolution in 2020)
- Common Council decision to scope out design options that represent the community's feedback on desired services (2025)
- Library Foundation study related to fundraising



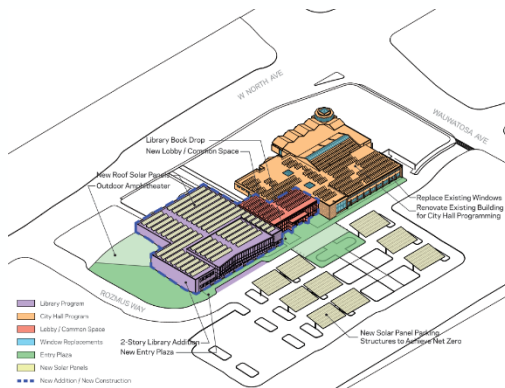
Overview of Options 3 & 4

Option 3

This plan would demolish only the oldest 70-year-old portion of the current City Hall complex and construct a brand-new, modern 77,000 sq ft, two-story Library. The remaining structure is renovated for City Hall offices.

\$95.7 million
PROJECT COST

\$23.52/month
RESIDENT COST*



Option 4

A full demolition of the existing building structure to pave the way for a brand-new, combined facility.

\$107.2 million
PROJECT COST

\$26.91/month
RESIDENT COST*



*cost per month for 20 years for an average home of \$418,800

Pros and Cons of Option 3: New Library and Remodeled City Hall

Pros

- Lower first dollar cost
- Only off-site lease necessary for City Hall and not Library
- Current library may be able to remain open during construction in its current site
- One move for the Library
- Library can open several months earlier than in Option 4

Cons

- Parking, services, wayfinding may be impacted during construction
- Likely two phases of construction.
- Noise, “living through construction” for patrons and employees
- Temporary mechanical or other equipment may be needed
- More maintenance and cost associated with the existing building portion vs. new construction
- Building footprint remains in the existing location, which reduces site flexibility
- Limited ways to add/modify entry ways, in terms of flow
- Constrained by existing conditions for replacing windows, HVAC, etc.

Pros and Cons of Option 4: New Building

Pros

- Slightly lower life cycle costs due to entirely new building
- Full control over the site plan/layout. This might open potential for housing or commercial options on the site.
- The building is all new, which means all spaces will be improved for comfort, function, flow, and aesthetics.
- All new windows, systems, etc. not constrained by current locations

Cons

- Higher first dollar cost
- Two moves for Library and City Hall
- Requires off-site lease for both Library and City Hall
- Off-site, reduced library services during construction

Finances of Options 3 & 4

Option 3

- Taxpayers: \$79.7 million
- Grant dollars: \$8 million
- Private fundraising: \$8 million

\$95.7 million
PROJECT COST

\$23.52/month
RESIDENT COST*

Option 4

- Taxpayers: \$91.2 million
- Grant dollars: \$8 million
- Private fundraising: \$8 million

\$107.2 million
PROJECT COST

\$26.91/month
RESIDENT COST*

Assumptions

- Wauwatosa has a self-imposed debt policy. We would temporarily raise the debt limit to finance the project.
- We will use multiple funding sources: capital budget, grant dollars, and private fundraising.
- Additional grant funds or private fundraising would reduce property tax impacts. For example, a \$1 million increase in grant funding or private fundraising will reduce the monthly resident cost by \$0.30.

*cost per month for 20 years for an average home of \$418,800

What happens next?

- Common Council selects a preferred option
- Staff works with OPN Architects to scope a contract for design services
 - Common Council considers design contract at its September meeting
- Library kicks off fundraising campaign
- Design of the building continues through 2027 including public input.
- Depending on fundraising, we could start construction as early as 2028.

