

Hartford Public Library: Downtown Library Repair and Renovation Project Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Why was the Downtown Library closed?

On December 23, 2022, the Downtown Hartford Public Library sustained severe water damage due to heavy rainfall followed by a sudden drop in temperature and freezing conditions. This caused several rooftop HVAC units to crack, releasing water that poured through multiple floors of the building and damaging ceilings, walls, floors, fixtures, wiring, elevator shafts, equipment and furniture. While most of the Library's collections were preserved, the building required extensive cleanup and repairs.

2. What repairs and renovations have been made to the Library?

During the repair process, Hartford Public Library took the opportunity to reimagine the Downtown Library's interior spaces, incorporating design changes that enhance operational efficiency and customer experience. Key points include:

- **Improved HVAC systems** and structural repairs
- **New elevator and reinforced main staircase**
- **Modern Community Amenities:** New community spaces, including quiet reading areas, a Community Living Room, and a technology area for digital learning and public programming.

3. What is the timeline for the completion?

- **Phase 1:** The initial repairs are complete, with the Downtown Library reopening to the public on November 20, 2024.
- **Phase 2:** A second renovation phase will begin in early 2025, focused on additional enhancements, specialized spaces, and expanded community programming. All public service areas are anticipated to be completed by early 2026.

4. What is open now?

Starting November 20, customers have access to a large section of the first floor, including adult collections, a small selection of children and teen collections, computers, passports, municipal IDs, new DVD machine, and The American Place services. The classrooms and Center for Contemporary Culture (CCC) are open for scheduled events and classes and can be reserved for public use.

5. What are the Downtown Library hours?

Monday through Thursday, 9:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Friday, 9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Saturday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Starting January 5, the Downtown Library will be open on Sundays.

6. When will the 2nd-floor teen center and 3rd-floor Children's Department open?

The 2nd-floor teen center, YOUmedia, and the 3rd-floor children's department will open in January 2025.

7. Is UConn returning to the Downtown Library's ground floor?

Yes, UConn classes will resume on-site in January 2025.

8. What is included in Phase 2?

Phase 2 of the renovation introduces several new and reimagined spaces, including:

- **The American Place and Social Innovation Center:** this space on the main floor will provide adult education classrooms, immigration services, and social services to improve community health and economic outcomes.
- **Small Business and Entrepreneurial Center:** A new area on the main floor focused on supporting local entrepreneurs, small businesses, and workforce readiness programs in collaboration with Capital Workforce Partners.
- **HPL Studios:** A new media production space on the main floor offering facilities for audio/video content creation and educational programs for residents interested in media careers. There will be a broadcasting partnership with Hartford Public Access Television (HPATV).
- **Event and Engagement Venue:** A new venue on the main floor for community events, discussions, and collaborations with UConn's CoLab, an interdisciplinary space for research and innovation.
- **Renovated Hartford History Center:** Located on the third floor, an updated space will prioritize public access and interactive learning experiences about Hartford's history.

9. How is this work being funded?

The cost to complete Phase 1 was \$10 million, and Phase 2 is estimated to cost an estimated \$11.5 million. The renovation project is funded through state funding, insurance claims (approximately \$5 million), and philanthropic donations. We are raising additional funds and have over 50% of our goal for Phase 2. Project plans include design alternates if we do not meet the goal or if we exceed the goal. The renovation supports the long-term goals outlined in the Library's 2019-2025 Capital Plan.

10. Who designed the plans for the remodel, and what was the inspiration?

Margaret Sullivan Studio led the design; TSKP Studio is the architect of record. Based on community feedback, the design inspiration includes local history, local voices, and local color palettes. The space is intended to be a journey through history and cultural relevance. Our design goals: colorful, intuitive wayfinding, flexible space, acoustic quality, collaborative, representative, inviting, feeling of safety, easy to navigate, inspirational.

11. Who was the construction firm?

Downes Construction Company, based out of New Britain, CT.

12. How can the community get involved in the renovation project?

HPL encourages community members to stay informed about the renovation process and participate in upcoming events. For more information, visit hplct.org, or to share your thoughts, write to us at contactus@hplct.org. The public will have an opportunity to contribute to the Restore Renew and Reimagine Capital Campaign in 2025.