

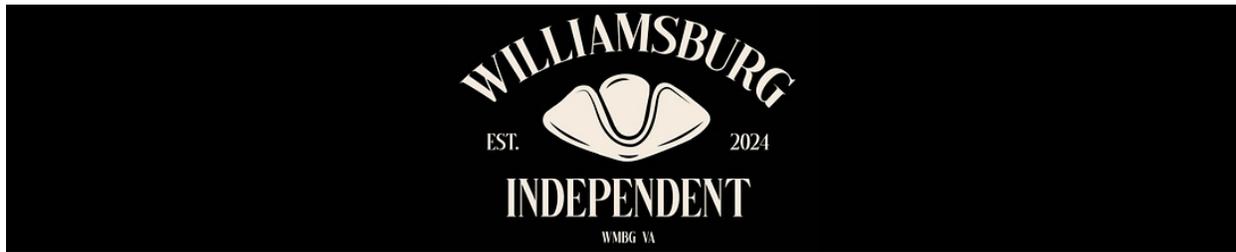
**From:** Williamsburg Independent <[williamsburgindependent@substack.com](mailto:williamsburgindependent@substack.com)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 12, 2025 5:11 PM

**To:** Bellamy, Mark <[bellamy@yorkcounty.gov](mailto:bellamy@yorkcounty.gov)>

**Subject:** Williamsburg's Potential Cost to Build and Furnish New Library Approaches \$30M

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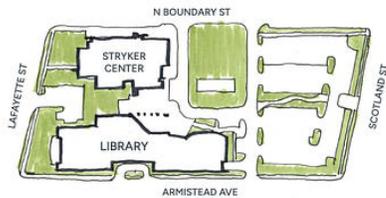
City Council reviews recommendations and public feedback after James City County and York County recently backed away from downtown project

[George Arbogust](#)

Aug 12

## SITE ORGANIZATION

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### OPTION 1 PREFERRED

- The existing library remains open during construction
- Single phase of construction
- Strong connection to Stryker Center
- 155 parking spaces

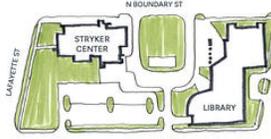


HOURIGAN

TMA  
THEATRE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

### OPTION 2

- Temporary closure of the theater and meeting rooms for approximately 20 months
- Increased traffic on Lafayette
- 150 parking spaces



### OPTION 3

- Full closure of the existing library for approximately 20 months and will require an alternative location for a temporary library facility
- 125 parking spaces



## WHAT ADDITIONAL PROGRAM OR PROGRAMMING WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN THE NEW LIBRARY BUILDING?

### COMMON THEMES

- Though not asking for a site selection, there seemed to be overwhelming support for Option 1, likely because of the ability to maintain library services during construction.
- There were more than a few questions about library parking during construction.
- Multiple comments touched on the policy change for street parking on Armistead.

### UNIQUE IDEAS

- One or two comments asked about integration of bus stops or traffic routes on site.
- A few respondents suggested keeping existing, mature trees wherever possible.

At its August 11, 2025 work session, Williamsburg City Council reviewed an updated proposal for a new downtown library with total costs estimated at up to \$30 million, including \$26 million for construction and \$4 million for furniture, fixtures, and equipment. No action was taken and no timeline was set for further review of the project by Council. (Courtesy Hourigan / Tymoff-Moss Architects)

At their scheduled work session on August 11, 2025, the Williamsburg City Council was presented with information about the latest proposal to build a new downtown library, which could cost as much as \$30M total. The figure includes \$26M to construct the facility and an additional \$4M for furniture, fixtures and equipment.

At the meeting, the Council asked city and library staff to collect more information regarding several issues. One request involved looking into potential changes to the agreement between Williamsburg, James City County and York County that specifies how much each will contribute to funding the library system's operations. No timeframe was set for the Council's next review of the project.

## **Funding challenges**

In March, Council Members approved a preliminary agreement to design and build a new library downtown estimated to cost between \$30-\$40M. Williamsburg budgeted \$20M to help pay for the facility, while anticipating the rest to come from James City County, York County and other sources like private donations.

Cooperation fell through when James City County decided to build their own \$49M library next to their recently approved government center. Around the same time, York County also backed away from contributing funds to the construction of a new Williamsburg library, opting to explore their own building options instead.

Subsequent changes to Williamsburg's plan seem to have factored in the funding changes, lowering the project's total estimated cost. But without funding support from other local jurisdictions, Williamsburg would likely need to come up with more than the approved \$20M to build the new library on their own. That would require further action from the Council in terms of allocating new funding.

According to the Council's discussion at the meeting, several issues still need to be addressed before final approval can be given for the project. One is the possible need to make changes to the library system's current joint operating agreement between Williamsburg, James City County and York County. The agreement is used to specify what each location contributes to operate the regional library system each year. In Fiscal Year 2025-26, Williamsburg is expected to contribute \$1.1M, James City County is expected to give \$6.3M and \$890K will come from York County. The costs of operating two new libraries will likely lead to changes in the funding provided from each jurisdiction, and for what purposes.

While the Council asked for more financial analysis regarding the impact of increased debt on City finances and credit ratings, they also asked for details about what library services and features might be lost if the higher funding is not approved.

## **Public input**

The selected contractor conducted two in-person sessions with about 250 attendees and an online survey with over 600 responses, totaling more than 850 responses. According to statements made at the meeting, only 25% of respondents were residents of Williamsburg, with the rest residing in James City County or York County.

The feedback identified several priorities among prospective users of the new library, including expanded collections, new services such as makerspaces, robotics and digital

memory labs as well as enhanced children's, tween, and teen spaces and an upgraded, ADA-compliant theater.

***The writer used AI tools and the following sources:***

- [Williamsburg City Council work session - LEC Presentation & Recommendations - August 11, 2025](#)
  - [Williamsburg City Council work session - Video - August 11, 2025](#)
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**Prior reporting by the Williamsburg Independent about the new library ...**



**[NEWS: Williamsburg and James City County Proceed with Separate Library Projects](#)**

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**[NEWS: Builder Selected for New \\$39M Williamsburg Library](#)**

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**Prior commentary about the proposed library in the Williamsburg Independent ...**



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