Why do we need a new library?
While the library's mission has expanded and use has skyrocketed, our facilities have failed to keep pace. The current building lacks the necessary space and flexibility to accommodate our programs and collections; entrances are not accessible; and poor or non-existent sightlines pose social safety risks throughout the building, especially for children. These structural limitations are compounded by a pressing need to address failing mechanical systems: the library has no air exchange system, resulting in poor air quality, and the heating systems are unreliable and inefficient. The elevator is near end-of-life, does not meet accessibility standards, and results in entrapments.

How did we get to this point in the process?
- **Program.** Library staff and Project Team developed a list of all the spaces needed in the new library and their approximate square footage.
- **Scope of Work.** The Project Team examined four options that would accomplish this program to varying degrees; obtained order of magnitude estimates; and held a number of public meetings. The Project Team recommended, and the Selectboard endorsed, staying on site and renovating and expanding the current library at an estimated total project cost of of $15 million.
- **Design Competition.** Three design teams presented conceptual designs, which were evaluated by a Professional Advisory Group, the Project Team, the library trustees, the library staff, and the community.
- **Schematic Design.** Town of Middlebury contracted with ReArch Company and Wiemann Lamphere Architects for schematic design and cost estimating services.

What is the overview of the design?
The current plans stay true to our guiding pillars of safety, accessibility, flexibility, and sustainability. The two additions from 1977 and 1988 will be removed, and a single, two-story addition will be built. There will be three at-grade entrances which will join in an interior atrium that will showcase the 1924 building, provide crucial after-hours access to community program spaces, and eliminate the accessibility challenges our current entryways pose. Space for children will be doubled, and middle and high school students will get their own distinct spaces. There will be several community meeting rooms of varying size, suitable for a range of public meetings, library programs, and community events. Areas for adult gathering, study, and remote work and learning will be consolidated and improved. An elevated outdoor programming space will provide a venue for library programs as well as a pleasant space for the community to read and gather.
What’s new since the initial conceptual design?
Over the past several months, our professional design team, ReArch Company and Wiemann Lamphere Architects, have been working hard to refine plans for the library renovation and expansion, responding to community input received over the summer as well as working through technical site challenges. Recent developments include:

- A site planning solution that will save (and possibly even add) parking spaces.
- Changes to the new Main Street entrance, which will reduce overall square footage and invite passersby to the new accessible entrance while showcasing the historic 1924 building.
- Interior design developments that make better use of the original 1924 building as a multi-use space while honoring its historic fabric. This space promises to become Middlebury's Great Room.
- Reorganization of surrounding spaces to allow the main floor children's room to significantly expand its services.

What’s next?
We are currently in the schematic design phase. This means we are still less than 20 percent through the design process. The plans are far from ready for construction. Our goal with this schematic design phase is to develop the plans enough to be able to confidently determine a total project cost for a bond vote. Once the designs reach that point, we will pause the design process to focus on funding. Once funding is secured, we will move into design development, and there will be ample opportunity for additional input and refinement at that time.

Funding
The project will be paid for through a mix of grants, government funds, private donations, and public borrowing. So while there will be a bond vote, the plan is not for the town of Middlebury to borrow the entire $15 million. While the budget is still being firmed up, we are currently optimistic that we will be able to secure about 1/3 of the total project cost in grants and private fundraising. It is important to note that while the town is required to bond for (or essentially guarantee) the full cost of the project, it is anticipated that other sources of funding will help foot the bill to reduce taxpayer burden as much as possible.

What will happen to the library during construction?
The library will relocate for the duration of the construction period (estimated to be one to one and a half years). A temporary location has not been selected yet, but we are in the beginning stages of searching for one. The library will continue to offer core services during the relocation period, including access to a reduced circulating collection; limited in-person programs; access to free WiFi and computers; and ongoing reference and tech support. A portion of the library's print collection will go into storage.