

Crozet Library project likely to have missed favorable construction market  
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By the end of the summer, the parking lot for the new Crozet Library will be completed. As for the \$9.6 million, 20,000-square-foot library itself, Albemarle officials said last week that, absent sufficient capital funding, its start date was uncertain and the project may have missed the window of a very favorable construction market.



*Trevor Henry, Albemarle's manager of facilities development*

Trevor Henry, Albemarle's manager of facilities development, told the Board of Supervisors last week that both the parking lot and final construction documents would be ready for the Crozet Library by August.


"We're going to have bid opening today for the library parking lot and anticipate ... starting work [in] early July," Henry said.

Henry also predicted that the community had lost a chance to take advantage of low prices in a favorable construction market. According to Henry, Albemarle is seeing construction costs rise again on the library design, as well as other school capital projects.

"The most recent estimate that we just received has that cost estimate at around \$6.8 million or just under \$300 a square foot," Henry said, describing the construction costs in the \$9.6 million overall project. "The big drivers in that cost estimate change are site work and concrete."

Citizens of Crozet has grown accustomed to delay when it comes to infrastructure called for in the Crozet Master Plan . That plan identified a new library as a priority back in December 2004.

The Albemarle Board of Supervisors approved the library's plans in 2009 but has been unable to fully fund the project in its capital budget. Meanwhile, Albemarle staff and local leaders have kept the design moving forward to get the project "bid ready."

 In April the Architectural Review Board approved the design and now more than 50 percent of the construction documents for the library have been completed, with final documents anticipated to be ready by early August.

Tim Tolson, secretary for the Crozet Community Advisory Council and a member of the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library board, said the completion of the parking lot was an important first step, especially with a streetscape project disrupting other parking.

"The concern with the streetscape project downtown is that traffic will avoid downtown because of construction, detours [and] all of that, and businesses there will not have the customer base that they need to stay in business," Tolson said in an interview. "We saw it happen with Scottsville ... where a lot of those restaurants, after many, many months of construction, had to close ..."

Bill Schrader, also a CCAC member, said he was concerned that the increasing cost of the library could create more financial challenges for the project. After Henry's presentation to the supervisors, Schrader

said this could potentially place the library on indefinite hold.

“Who knows what the thinking will be in 2015, 2016, whether they’re going to say the library’s No. 1 or the fire department is No. 1,” Schrader said in an interview. “So if we don’t get it quickly, we’re just back in the hopper with every other project.”

Across the street from the library site, a major commercial development is beginning its review by the Architectural Review Board. Claudius Place is a two-story, 6,067-square-foot building intended to house offices, retail and a restaurant.

Schrader said he was disappointed the county missed a great construction market, but he views Claudius Place as a key indicator that the library will help revitalize downtown Crozet.

“They missed a golden opportunity, we’ll never get back the prices we could have had a year ago,” Schrader said. “I’m down on that side, but I’m up on the side that again Claudius Place says this is what can happen when you put the library in ... they understand the growth that happens around the library.”

County Executive Tom Foley said the Crozet Library would be back before the board in August with complete construction documents and a final cost estimate. The supervisors learned in a separate meeting last week that they had an opportunity to refinance some existing debt and make another \$10 million available immediately for capital projects. The board is expected to discuss whether to allocate these funds toward the library project in the fall.

Crozet Library Timeline