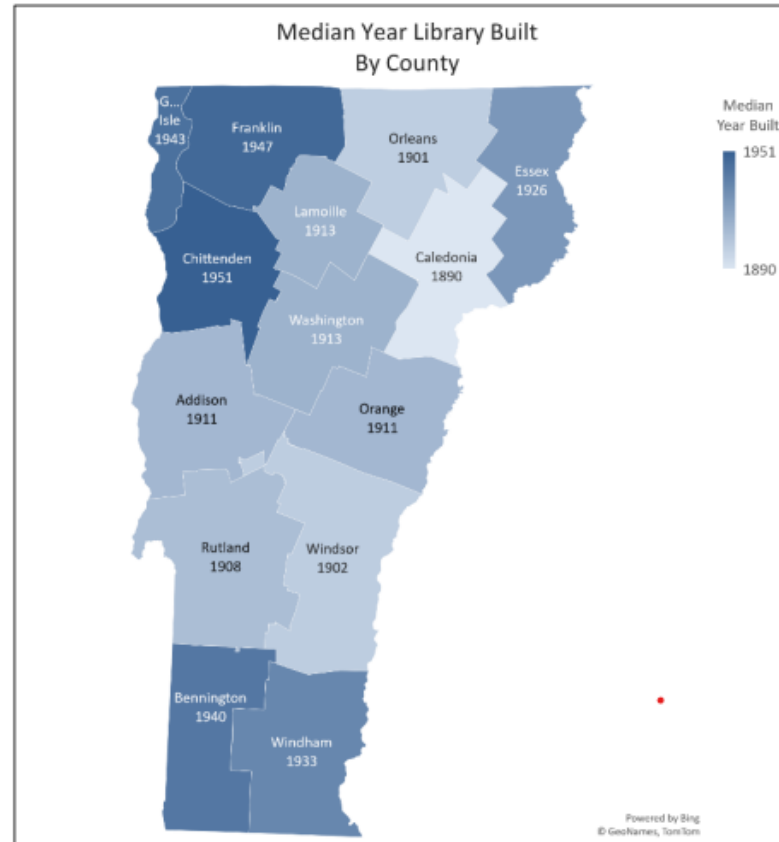




Vermont Public Library Capital Needs

Year Library Built by County (median)



Source: <https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/news/public-library-statistics>

How Does Building Size & Condition Meet Needs (median)

	How Does Size Meet Needs?	How Does Condition Meet Needs?
Poor	14%	7%
Fair	24%	18%
Average	24%	28%
Good	25%	27%
Excellent	12%	17%

Source: <https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/news/public-library-statistics>

2023 Public Library Capital Projects

Needs Assessment

- Received 123 respondents to survey
- 101 of those included project estimates, which added up to \$82 million

2024 Treasury CPF Applications

- 71 public libraries applied with projects totaling \$100.8 million
- 14 grants were awarded totaling \$15.9 million
- 57 projects were not funded

2026 HUD Grant

The Department plans to award grants to public libraries for the repair or replacement of existing features of their library buildings and/or for accessibility upgrades. The Department anticipates awarding at least 20 grants of \$50,000-400,000 through a highly competitive process.

Launch webinar had 94 live attendees, as well as those who have watched the recording since.

Total allotment: \$9.6 million

Schedule:

- December 3, 2025: HUD Capital Project Grant Application opens
- March 31, 2026: HUD Capital Project Grant Application closes
- Summer 2026: Department announces awards

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/capitalprojectgrants/public-facilities-preservation>

U.S. Government Accountability Office

2025 Report

“Public libraries serve as cornerstones of many communities. But aging and outdated buildings can make it hard for libraries to meet increasing expectations to provide access to programming, technology, emergency services, and voting sites—in addition to books.

About 6,000 libraries nationwide (nearly 40%) say that part of their building is in poor condition, and about 7,000 report having a physical barrier to access for people with disabilities.

Federal funding is generally available for library programs and services, not for construction or repairs. Many libraries cite funding and construction costs as challenges to addressing building needs.”

<https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-107262>

Many Buildings Are Reported to Be in Poor Condition, with Increasing Deferred Maintenance

GAO-26-107262

December 2025

A report to congressional committees

For more information, contact: David Marroni at marronid@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

An estimated 38 percent (about 6,000) of the nation's public libraries have at least one building system, such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), in poor condition, according to GAO's survey of libraries. An estimated 61 percent, or 9,800 libraries, have at least one building system or feature that poses a potential health or safety concern. Library size and physical accessibility were most frequently cited as potential concerns. For example, librarians we spoke with, and survey respondents, mentioned small library buildings can have inaccessible areas, obstructed walkways, and overcrowding.

Shower Curtains Used Inside Library to Protect Books from Roof Leaks (left), and One of Several Damaged Air Conditioning Units (right)



Source: GAO. | GAO-26-107262

While the total cost to repair public library facilities nationwide is unknown, an estimated 70 percent (about 11,200 libraries) have a backlog of deferred maintenance and repair, according to GAO's survey. According to budget forecasts and planned projects, an estimated 70 percent of libraries also expect deferred maintenance to persist or increase in the next 3 years. One librarian estimated needing about \$60,000 for a new HVAC, and another librarian estimated more than \$225,000 in construction costs for building repair needs, including for asbestos removal. An estimated 39 percent, or 6,200 libraries, had a deferred maintenance backlog of more than \$100,000 each.

An estimated 71 percent of public libraries cited construction costs, such as labor and materials, and limited funding availability, as key challenges to addressing maintenance and repairs. An estimated 90 percent of libraries use local funding to address maintenance and repairs. However, reliance on local funding, particularly for small town rural libraries and libraries in high-poverty areas, can also pose challenges to addressing facility repair needs. For example, these areas may have less population and a more limited funding base, as well as fewer resources to apply for grants, provide required matching funds, or fundraise.

Why GAO Did This Study

Beyond lending books, public libraries provide public spaces to host community programs and serve as voting sites and emergency centers. However, many libraries are in aging buildings, and their building systems may need repair or replacement to serve community needs. While the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), supports library programs and services, libraries are prohibited from using IMLS funds for building construction and repairs.

The Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024, included a provision for GAO to study the availability and conditions of library facilities. This report examines the reported physical conditions of library facilities and the estimated cost and challenges to addressing facility repair needs, among other objectives.

GAO conducted a nationally representative survey of about 16,400 public libraries in 50 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories. The survey results can be found in the "[Additional Data](#)" link of GAO's website. GAO also visited 21 public and two tribal libraries in seven states and territories; reviewed data on estimated costs to address facility repair needs; and interviewed officials from IMLS; local and tribal libraries; state library administrative agencies; and other library stakeholders, including the American Library Association; Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums; Association of Rural and Small Libraries; and Urban Libraries Council.