

For Immediate Release

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Historic E.P. Foster Library Secures \$13 Million for Major Upgrades

Ventura, Calif. — The City of Ventura and Ventura County Libraries are excited to announce a \$13 million renovation project for the historic E.P. Foster Library in Downtown Ventura. These funds will transform the library into a modern, accessible space for the community, offering services year-round and serving as a cooling center during extreme heat events. Construction is scheduled to begin in early 2026 and be completed by 2027.

“The E.P. Foster Library has been a cornerstone of our community for over a century, and this renovation marks a significant step towards ensuring it remains a vital resource for generations to come,” said County Supervisor Matt LaVere. “These improvements will not only enhance the library’s services, but also provide a safe and welcoming space during extreme heat, reflecting our commitment to the health, safety, and well-being of all residents.”

The renovation project is backed by a collaborative funding effort, with significant contributions from state, federal, and local grants. In 2023, the library received an \$8.7 million Building Forward Grant from the California State Library, focused on improving library facilities across the state. This grant requires a 50 percent match, with the City of Ventura and Ventura County splitting the cost to support this vital community resource. Congressman Salud Carbajal secured an additional \$750,000 through Community Project Funding to help fund a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system in the library.

In past years, E.P. Foster has struggled to remain operational during heat waves due to the lack of air conditioning, leaving vulnerable populations—such as older adults and people without housing—without a safe refuge. Recently, on September 6, the library had to close for the day per the California Heat Illness Prevention Standard when temperatures reached over 80 degrees Fahrenheit inside the building.

The installation of an HVAC system and other critical upgrades will not only allow the library to stay open and operating during excessive heat but also serve as a crucial community cooling center. Additional upgrades to the E.P. Foster Library include a new elevator to improve accessibility, new windows, roof replacement, and restroom renovations to enhance the visitor experience.

“We have received tremendous support from our community partners in securing these funds,” said Ventura County Library Director Nancy Schram. “These renovations will ensure that that historic building remains a safe, accessible, and welcoming resource for all community members.”

Improvements will modernize the facility and address critical building and safety code requirements. Built in 1921, with additions in 1959, the E.P. Foster Library is a historic landmark that once served as Ventura’s original City Hall and library. While the planned upgrades will modernize its infrastructure, they will also preserve the building’s historic character. The

renovations focus primarily on interior updates, ensuring the architectural integrity and aesthetic of the library remain intact.

“Our public libraries provide a safe and comfortable space for people to read, learn, access computers, pursue career development, and find community,” said Mayor Joe Schroeder. “The City is proud to be a part of the collaborative effort to maintain and revitalize this important community resource.”

Annually, 339,434 people utilize the E.P. Foster Library. By investing in the infrastructure and accessibility of this historic building, the project aims to create a safe, sustainable, and functional space that meets the modern-day needs of the community while preserving its historic legacy.

Find updates on the project in the coming months at www.vencolibrary.org. For questions regarding the project, please contact Director of the Ventura County Library System Nancy Schram at nancy.schram@ventura.org.

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