

# Idaho Statesman

## Boise could land a world-renowned architect for its library



Architect Moshe Safdie designed the Salt Lake City Library, whose interior is shown here, as a place to linger, not just find books. It includes a rooftop garden, cafe, shops and rotating art exhibits. The library hosts film lectures and, occasionally, live music. The Boise City Council is scheduled to vote Tuesday on a proposal to hire Safdie to design a new main library here. **Rick Bowmer** AP

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The city of Boise is poised to hire a [world-famous architect](#) to design [a new main library](#).

If the City Council approves [Moshe Safdie's](#) contract, he and his team will work with Boise architecture firm CSHQA to incorporate a 110,000-square-foot library; 22,000 square feet for the city's Arts and History Department; and an 18,000-square-foot

public events and arts space in one building on the roughly five-acre parcel where the existing main library stands north of the Boise River and west of Capitol Boulevard.

“With his involvement, this is going to be one of the most important buildings in Boise that we’ve ever built,” city spokesman Mike Journee said.

Safdie is famous for [designing all kinds of buildings](#), from [million-square-foot office towers](#) and [huge residential complexes](#) to public [libraries in Salt Lake City](#) and [Vancouver, British Columbia](#).

## **REMODEL, EXPAND OR REPLACE**

Boise has been trying to upgrade or replace its main library for almost two decades. The existing library is a retrofitted warehouse from the 1940s. It’s smaller and offers fewer materials than libraries in peer cities like Salt Lake City or Spokane, Washington.

In 2008, estimates for replacing it ran as high as \$120 million — too much for the City Council to swallow. Five years later, the city hired Utah firm Architectural Nexus and Dallas-based library consultant Godfrey’s Associates [to work on options](#) for remodeling, expanding or replacing the building.

Since then, the city has weighed the costs against the benefits of each approach. Remodeling the existing building would be cheaper but might buy only a few years.

Last year, Boise solicited proposals from design teams. Safdie’s team was one of seven that applied. The city interviewed five. Safdie’s team rose to the top, library Director Kevin Booe said, partly because it came up with ideas that neither the city nor anyone else thought of.

“One of the questions I asked him was, ‘Why would you want to do this project? It seems like small potatoes for you,’” Booe said. “And he said, ‘No. I really like the community projects.’”

## **WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE?**

Safdie visited Boise in December and came back in January. Boise Arts and History Director Terri Schorzman said she spent some time with him.

“The second time he came, he spent the day wandering that entire site, into Julia Davis Park, trying to look at all the vantage points, looking at every single angle and getting a sense of location and place and color,” Schorzman said. “His notebook was just filled with amazing stuff he’d already worked on, just in that day.”

Whatever sketches Safdie might have drawn weren't available Thursday. Journee said the design team didn't submit any drawings with its application.

Nor does Boise have preconceived ideas for what the library building should look like. Safdie is comfortable working within Boise's budget, which the city anticipates will be somewhere around \$70 million.

## **CONTRACT AND TIMELINE**

Boise would pay Safdie, his team and CSHQA \$395,000 to design the library. Assuming the council approves that contract, the design team could provide preliminary concepts by April. Booe said the team could include ideas for reusing the existing building as well as replacing it.

The city hopes to have a final, detailed design by early May.

What Boise doesn't have is a firm plan to pay for the new library. Journee said about half of the money would come from some combination of fundraising and contributions from the city and the Capital City Development Corp., Boise's urban renewal agency.

Safdie's name alone could boost fundraising, said Boise Director of Philanthropy Chandra Ford. The other half would come through some other funding mechanism, likely to include debt financing, Journee said.

The city hopes to break ground in fall 2019 and hold a grand opening in late 2021, Booe said.

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