

ISSUE 4

# 2026 TRENDS IN MUNICIPAL CONSTRUCTION:

HOW CITIES, TOWNSHIPS,  
& VILLAGE BOARDS ARE  
BUILDING SMARTER & FASTER



**L**ocal government leaders face pressure to do more with less. And do it faster, without disrupting services.

In 2026, capital planning looks different than it did just a few years ago. From council chambers to community centers, municipal construction is becoming more agile, tech-forward, and cost-conscious.

Mayors and Village Managers are no longer just approving buildings and physical spaces. Today, they are increasingly approving systems that improve transparency, response times, and long-term budgets.

Here are five trends shaping public-sector building projects across towns, villages, and townships that will impact your community in 2026.

### **CITY HALL IS GOING DIGITAL**

The days of the static council chamber are over. Public facilities now include digital kiosks, hybrid meeting spaces, and e-service infrastructure.

Residents expect to interact with their local government the same way they interact with their bank or at Starbucks. That means mobile, online and on-demand. Municipalities are responding by renovating lobbies to include self-service kiosks for bill payments and permit applications. This reduces lines and frees up staff for more complex tasks.

Council and Board chambers are also getting a major overhaul. “Hybrid” is the new standard. Audio-visual systems are being upgraded to support high-definition streaming and two-way interaction for remote participants. This ensures that a resident who cannot physically attend a board meeting can still have their voice heard clearly.

Wayfinding is also getting a necessary upgrade. Static directories are being replaced by interactive screens that help visitors navigate complex government buildings. These displays can instantly update to show room changes for hearings or promote local events. It simplifies the visitor experience and makes the building feel more open and accessible to the public.

Connectivity is reshaping the lobby experience as well. Municipalities are installing high-speed Wi-Fi and furniture with integrated power sources to encourage public use. This turns a cold waiting room into a productive community workspace. Residents can now download large files or finish a work assignment comfortably while waiting for a planning meeting to start.



### **THE HYBRID EXPECTATION: WHY TECH UPDATES MATTER**

#### **THE NEW NORMAL:**

A recent workplace trend report shows that 62% of large organizations now conduct hybrid town halls, setting a standard that citizens now expect from local government. *(2025 Workplace Trends Report)*

#### **TRANSPARENCY WINS:**

84% of people want more transparency from leadership. Digital access to meetings is the most direct way to provide it. *(Top Town Hall Trends and Stats 2025)*

#### **REPLAYS DRIVE ENGAGEMENT:**

Offering on-demand replays of meetings can increase engagement by 58%, ensuring residents who work late shifts or travel can still stay informed. *(Livestorm)*

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**RENOVATIONS ARE OUTPACING NEW BUILDS**

Most municipalities are focused on upgrading and expanding existing buildings rather than starting from scratch.

It is often faster and more politically palatable to modernize a beloved village hall than to demolish it. Adaptive reuse allows towns to preserve their history while updating HVAC, lighting, and accessibility standards.

This trend is driven by both sustainability and economics. Renovating an existing core and shell significantly reduces the carbon footprint of a project compared to a new build. It also simplifies the permitting process. Leaders are taking existing assets like vacant schools or even, in some cases, empty retail spaces and converting them into functional community hubs.

**RETHINK, REUSE, RENOVATE: THE CASE FOR MODERNIZATION**

**FASTER STARTS:**  
Renovating existing structures avoids lengthy land acquisition and zoning battles, allowing projects to break ground months sooner.

**ENERGY EFFICIENCY:**  
Modernizing an older building with new windows and insulation is a top priority for 2026. Updates can significantly lower utility costs while preserving the community’s architectural character.

**REDUCED WASTE:**  
Adaptive reuse drastically cuts construction waste, aligning with new state and federal goals for reducing the carbon footprint of public infrastructure.

**DESIGNING FOR HEALTH & SPEED: MODERN FIRE & POLICE FEATURES**

**CANCER PREVENTION:**  
New “Hot Zone” designs that isolate soiled gear from living areas are critical. Carcinogen exposure is a leading health risk for firefighters.

**FASTER RESPONSE:**  
Stations are moving to four-fold doors that open horizontally. These clear the doorway seconds faster than traditional overhead doors, shaving critical time off emergency responses.

**MENTAL WELLNESS:**  
2026 designs prioritize mental health with dedicated fitness rooms, private bunk areas, and biophilic designs (natural light/greenery) to reduce stress for first responders.

**MORE MUNICIPALITIES ARE USING JOB ORDER CONTRACTING TO GET AND KEEP PROJECTS MOVING**

In 2026, cities, towns, and village boards are increasingly turning to Job Order Contracting (JOC) to tackle small and midsize facility projects without delays.

JOC offers a legally bid, pre-approved procurement method that helps local governments complete work faster. All without going out to bid each time

Instead of waiting months for a traditional bid cycle to fix a leaking roof or renovate a bathroom, a Village Manager can use JOC to get a contractor on-site in weeks. This method uses a catalog of pre-priced construction tasks, so costs are transparent from day one. It is the most efficient way to clear a backlog of deferred maintenance.

**HOW MUNICIPALITIES ARE USING JOC**

**END-OF-YEAR FUNDING**

Use “spend it or lose it” funds on ready-to-go projects, avoiding the long traditional bid process.

**TIME-SENSITIVE PROJECTS**

When a project must be done now, JOC bypasses the months-long bidding cycle, allowing work to start in days.

**LIMITED SCHEDULING WINDOW PROJECTS**

Perfect for schools and public buildings. JOC allows teams to complete projects during short breaks (like winter or spring break).

**REPLACEMENT PROJECTS**

When a critical piece of equipment like a boiler or HVAC unit fails, JOC provides a pre-approved contractor to replace it immediately.

**AUGMENT IN-HOUSE STAFF**

When your in-house team is overloaded or lacks a specific skill, JOC brings in qualified crews to handle the work, acting as an extension of your staff.

**REMEDIATION WORK**

For unexpected issues like mold or water damage, JOC allows for a rapid response to assess, contain, and complete repairs.

**PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS**

A simple way to manage ongoing upgrades, from installing new playground equipment to repairing pathways and facilities.

**LEED IMPROVEMENTS**

JOC can be used to manage multiple small-scale green upgrades, like new lighting or low-flow fixtures, to help buildings meet sustainability goals.

**ADA UPGRADES**

Efficiently complete accessibility upgrades across multiple buildings, such as installing ramps, updating restrooms, or adding handrails.

**PUNCH LIST**

Hire a trusted JOC contractor to complete leftover items from a previous project that another contractor failed to finish.

**PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITIES ARE IN DEMAND**

Police, fire, and emergency services are upgrading buildings for modern tech and training needs. The “red brick firehouse” is evolving into a high-performance facility.

New designs prioritize the health of first responders. This means distinct “Hot Zones” and “Cold Zones” to separate carcinogens found on turnout gear from living quarters. Ventilation systems are becoming more sophisticated to ensure dangerous particulates do not migrate into kitchens or bunk rooms.

Technology is also reshaping the layout. Police stations are being retrofitted to handle the massive data storage needs of body cameras and digital evidence. Dispatch centers are being hardened against severe weather, ensuring that 911 calls are answered even during the worst storms.



## MAINTENANCE-FREE MATERIALS ARE IN

Towns are choosing materials with minimal upkeep and long replacement cycles due to budget realities. The goal is to build it once and not touch it for 20 years.

Public works directors are steering architects toward durable options like polished concrete floors, which eliminate the need for waxing and stripping. Exterior designs are favoring masonry and metal panels over materials that require frequent painting or sealing.

This shift lowers the “Total Cost of Ownership.” While a durable material might cost slightly more upfront, the savings in man-hours and cleaning supplies make it the responsible choice for taxpayer dollars over the life of the building.

### LAST TO BUILD; LOWERING THE TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

#### DURABILITY OVER PRICE:

Investing in high-performance materials (like polished concrete or terrazzo) reduces long-term maintenance costs and extends the facility’s lifecycle.

#### THE COST OF CHEAP:

“Value engineering” often leads to higher costs later. Neglected or cheap systems can increase energy consumption by 30-60% over time. *(New Buildings Institute)*

#### LIFECYCLE SAVINGS:

Building to higher durability standards generates thousands in operational savings per year, proving that higher initial specs lower the long-term burden on taxpayers.



## CONCLUSION

Your village hall, police station, and public works facility are where your staff gather and operate. But, they’re also so much more: the engine of your community.

F.H. Paschen has partnered with municipalities across the country to deliver essential infrastructure. Whether it is a quick repair through our JOC program or a major renovation of your public safety complex, we understand the unique constraints of public sector work. We respect the budget, the schedule, and the trust your residents place in you.

Let’s build a better community. Together.



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