

## Project Memorandum

**Date:** August 29, 2025

**To:** Whitewater Public Library

**From:** Marisa Urbina, AIA  
Project Manager at Studio GC

**Re:** Whitewater Public Library: Sprinkler Protection Clarification

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Sequence of events related to the construction of The Whitewater Public Library Addition and Renovation project as related to sprinkler and fire protection of the existing interstitial above ceiling space.

### DSPS Conditional Approval

May-August 2024 - Studio GC submitted and received conditional approval from DSPS for the Building, HVAC, and Plumbing reviews of the Addition and Renovation project full drawing set. The drawing sets provided to DSPS and issued for construction did not include installation of existing interstitial ceiling space or attic sprinklers or added fire protection in those locations, as those items were not required to be altered by the applicable codes. Upon the completion of the review by DSPS, there were no comments on any of the conditional approval documents indicating missing items related to interstitial ceiling space or attic sprinklers or fire protection, thereby confirming our code analysis.

November-December 2024 - The subcontractor submitted and received conditional approval from DSPS as related to Fire Protection for PHASE 1 - ADDITION WORK ONLY. Phase 2 had not been submitted until mid-August 2025 and is currently with DSPS and pending approval. The division of work and timing for the submittal of the sprinkler work for phase one and phase two was dictated by the sprinkler contractor.

Note: The DSPS document that provided conditional approval for Phase 1 was provided to only the subcontractor and city. This document was not provided to Studio GC until July, 2025, after the identification of the issue. The comments on the DSPS review letter relate to the addition area only (Phase 1) because of how the sprinkler contractor decided to phase the submittal.

### Interstitial Above Ceiling Sprinkler Protection Question Timeline

July-August 2025

1. During their survey of the existing system, the sprinkler subcontractor asked a question regarding the system which was outside of the scope of work. They asked whether the existing building above ceiling spaces required sprinkler protection. This question was sent to Studio GC via RFI (Request for Information).
2. Studio GC completed our due diligence, which included a code review and initiated discussion to involve the local City of Whitewater building inspector, Joe Mesler.
3. Studio GC, through their code review, found that the level of work within the existing building was classified as being low level alteration. Low level alteration, as defined in the code, does not require the existing exposed combustibles to be protected per the current code requirements. Studio GC verbally presented this information to Joe Mesler and Chief Ryan Dion on site at the library. Both Mesler and Dion requested written documentation from Studio GC.
4. Studio GC presented a written document titled, "Whitewater Sprinkler Code Report" that was dated 07/25, which indicated that protection is not required to be installed above ceiling for this building project because of the level of alteration work.
5. On 7/28/2025, a virtual meeting was held with Studio GC, The City of Whitewater, and Whitewater Public Library. The City of Whitewater representatives indicated to Studio GC that they disagreed with the code report provided by Studio GC. The City noted they had a DSPS Conditional Approval Sprinkler letter from December 2024, which indicates the required protection of combustible materials. (As noted above, this letter from December applied to Phase 1, addition work, only due to the sprinkler contractor separation of the submittal). The city representatives also noted they presented the existing above ceiling sprinkler item to DSPS representative, Joe Nowicki. After the state's consideration of the issue, an email response was provided from Joe Nowicki, indicating that, "The department has determined that once a combustible concealed space that had been inaccessible is made accessible it is required to meet current code". The city provided this response to Studio GC. Upon Studio GC review, our office agreed to communicate with Joe Nowicki regarding this item.
6. Studio GC contacted the above referenced DSPS representative, Joe Nowicki, on 7/28/25 via phone and email and received clarification the

attic was NOT required to meet the current code, but the interstitial ceiling space was considered to have been made accessible with the full removal of the ACT ceiling. As such, DSPS is requiring the existing interstitial above ceiling space to meet the current code and receive protection of exposed combustibles.

7. Studio GC reached out to the general contractor for pricing from the contractor and this pricing was provided on 8/8/25 to be \$112,914.04 for the work.
8. Studio GC provided an updated document titled, "Whitewater Sprinkler Protection Update" that was dated 8/15, to the City of Whitewater.

Studio GC stands by our initial assessment based on the level of alteration, the existing combustible protection does not need to be elevated to current code requirements. The City of Whitewater decision to confer with the state to determine a course of action has now resulted in the installation of additional sprinklers and added combustible protection within the interstitial above ceiling space. The design solution to add this work has now been submitted to DSPS for approval. In coordination with the Whitewater Public Library team, Studio GC issued a Construction Change Directive to have the contractor start the work immediately on site to avoid further project delays. This work remains in progress and ongoing.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

cc: Jennifer Motzko, Library Board President  
Diane Jaroch, Library Director  
Darren Schretter, Principal, Studio GC

References: "LTR-25\_0725-Whitewater Sprinkler Code Report-FINAL.PDF"  
"25\_0815-Whitewater Public Library Sprinkler Protection Update.PDF"