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# The Elkhart Truth

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WE BUILD COMMUNITY • YEAR 137, NO. 133

## Elkhart General Hospital plans \$37M Emergency and Trauma Center expansion

TRUTH STAFF

ELKHART — Elkhart General Hospital on Tuesday announced the expansion and renovation of its Emergency and Trauma Center, a project aimed at increasing capacity, reducing wait times and improving patient experience at one of the region's busiest emergency departments.

The \$37 million project will move through planning, design, permitting and pre-construction preparation throughout 2026, with major construction that patients and the community will see expected to begin in 2027.

Upon completion in 2028, the Emergency Department

will feature an expanded trauma center footprint with upgraded care spaces and equipment, private patient rooms in place of the current mix of private rooms and semi-private bays, four dedicated behavioral health rooms and improved access for ambulances and patients arriving by car.

Elkhart General Hospital is Elkhart County's only verified trauma center. As a critical safety net for the community, this means 24/7 access to care for serious injuries, vehicle crashes, strokes and



CARTER-ROBERTSON



BACHE

falls. The hospital's highly trained teams are equipped to quickly assess, stabilize and treat trauma patients, ensuring life-saving care is available close to home.

"When someone needs emergency and trauma care, every minute matters," said Elkhart General Hospital President Kira Carter-Robertson. "This project is a meaningful investment in our community, helping our teams provide faster, more private and more compassionate care when patients

and families need us most."

The Elkhart General Emergency Department sees nearly 50,000 patient visits each year, a number that continues to grow. The expansion will help ensure continued safe and efficient care and treatment of patients well into the future.

"Emergency medicine depends on speed, coordination and having the right resources in place for our care team," said Vice President of Medical Affairs Dr. Michelle Bache. "This expansion will strengthen our ability to deliver high-quality care efficiently, while also creating an environment that better supports both patients and our



Photo provided / Beacon Health

This is an artist's rendering of Elkhart General Hospital's proposed Emergency and Trauma Center.

care teams."

Physicians, clinicians, and staff provided input on the design of the 4,750-square-foot addition and 21,045-square-foot existing Emergency Department to modernize the space, improve workflow and streamline the delivery of care.

The Beacon Health Foundation is raising funds toward a \$15 million community

fundraising goal in support of the project.

Elkhart General Hospital is part of Beacon Health System, a locally governed, nonprofit healthcare system serving northern Indiana and southwest Michigan. Every dollar that Beacon generates is reinvested directly into patient care and community health initiatives, the organization said.



Elkhart Truth photos / Clayton Sidenbender

Elkhart fans react in disbelief and disappointment after Belgium scores its third goal against the United States during a World Cup watch party at the Elkhart Public Library's downtown branch parking lot on Monday evening.

## Another type of patriotic event | Elkhart Library hosts World Cup watch party

By CLAYTON SIDENBENDER  
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ELKHART — Fans and spectators at the Elkhart Public Library downtown branch watched on a big screen Monday as the U.S. Men's national soccer team collapsed against Belgium 4-1.

Trevor Wendzonka, chief marketing officer at the Elkhart Public Library, said the library originally planned an outdoor curbside concert on Friday evening with Paul Erdman, but the concert had to be moved inside due to the rain.

"Some of the things that we had planned to be part of downtown Elkhart's America 250 celebration we kind of had to put on hold," Wendzonka said. "And so that's why we thought, 'Well, we've got some things ready. Let's pull together another type of community event.' We've not really done a whole lot with sports, with soccer, in the past, but we thought that this would be a great way to just kind of bring some people together, have some fun on a Monday night, watch Team USA and hopefully, we'll see a win here."

The event featured special surprises before the game including a local musician, Jim Catalano, who played

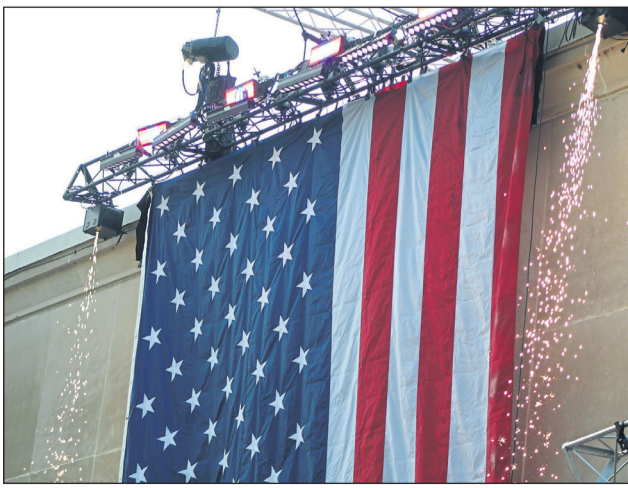


Elkhart fans celebrate after the U.S. Men's national soccer team scores its first and only goal during the World Cup watch party at the Elkhart Public Library downtown branch on Monday evening.

The Elkhart Public Library downtown branch drapes an American flag over the side of its building with sparks shooting out on either side during a World Cup watch game on Monday evening.

a rope drum with a colonial sound. The library also borrowed a large American flag from Federated Media that they draped over the side of the downtown branch library building before the game.

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## Elkhart officer arrested on invasion of privacy charge

By JORDAN FOUTS  
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ELKHART — An officer with the Elkhart Police Department has been jailed on accusations of invasion of privacy.

Cpl. Tyler Koepfel, 30, was arrested on the misdemeanor charge Monday by detectives with the Elkhart County Sheriff's Office. He was booked in the Elkhart County Correctional Facility and the allegations were forwarded to the Elkhart County Prosecutor's Office for consideration of formal charges.

Details of the investigation or an initial court date were not available Tuesday morning.

Koepfel was on administrative leave at the time of the incident, according to EPD spokeswoman Jessica McBrier. She said he was previously placed on paid leave on June 30, pending



KOEPFEL

the outcome of an investigation by an outside law enforcement agency and the Elkhart Police Professional Standards Division.

"The alleged invasions of privacy and his arrest on those accusations occurred after Koepfel was placed on administrative leave," McBrier said. "As they are ongoing investigations, I cannot discuss details about the investigations underlying Koepfel's June 30, 2026, administrative leave."

Koepfel will remain on leave pending further criminal and internal investigations, according to the department's public information officer.

Koepfel was sworn in as an Elkhart police officer in January 2022.

## Attempted murder charge filed in suffocation incident

By JORDAN FOUTS  
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ELKHART — An Elkhart man is accused of trying to kill a woman after she came to his home to get her belongings back.

Braulio Amezcuita, 27, faces one count of attempted murder after he allegedly tried to suffocate a woman on June 29. Police say he stopped the woman from breathing twice, once with a chokehold and once with a pillow, leaving her with severe injuries to her throat.

She suffered from dissected carotid arteries, leaving her at strong risk of a stroke, according to police.

Amezcuita was booked in the Elkhart County Correctional Facility where he is being held without bond. His initial hearing is set for Thursday in Elkhart County Circuit Court.

According to court documents:

The victim contacted police shortly before 4 a.m. to report that Braulio had attacked her. She said she came home to find him removing her personal items



AMEZCUITA

and taking them to his own residence at 1039 Taylor St. She said she went there to retrieve her things and refused to leave when he told her to get out, according to police. A physical struggle broke out and Amezcuita allegedly took her phone from her hand when she tried to call 911.

He then wrapped his arm around her neck and put his other hand over her face, preventing her from being able to breathe, the victim alleged. She said he also struck her on the side of the face, and that she reacted by biting him on the wrist hard enough to draw blood.

The victim said Amezcuita is trained in mixed martial arts and that she tried to get him to release the chokehold by tapping his arm. She said she went into a panic attack after she was released.

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