

[Friends of the Library Pledge \\$650,000 to New Branch](#)



On Sunday, June 27, [The Friends of the Monroe County Public Library Foundation](#) pledged to donate \$650,000 to the Library to equip a new branch on the south side of Monroe County.

“We are excited to partner with the MCPL in funding the Southwest Branch as just one more way the Friends support the vision and values of the Library,” said Emily Bedwell, Friends of the Library Board President. “We believe that the strength of the community lies in our public libraries and their unique positioning to be centers of growth, learning, and civil engagement.”

“We are incredibly grateful for our long and supportive relationship with the Friends of the Library. This generous financial pledge helps to ensure we can better serve our community,” said Marilyn Wood, Library Director.

Wood said that the donation will support furnishings and equipment in the new spaces and will allow the Library to be flexible with other funds, giving it the latitude to do things it might not be able to do otherwise.

[Learn how you can contribute to the Friends’ fund drive for the Southwest Branch Library.](#)

The Friends’ gift will supplement a \$6 million bond recently approved by the Monroe County Council, which roughly matches the funds the Library has saved for the new branch. With funding secured, the Library is just a few steps away from breaking ground. Construction is tentatively set to begin in Fall 2021 with the Branch opening in late 2022.

The new 21,000-square-foot Library will sit on approximately five acres of property on the Southwest corner of the Batchelor Middle School grounds at 890 W. Gordon Pike, west of the South Rogers Street and West Gordon Pike roundabout.

Although details are still being finalized, planning for the future branch has been underway for quite some time. In 2018, feedback was solicited through community conversations to determine the branch’s general location. The Southwest portion of the county was identified as an ideal location due to its residential and population growth. Wood says the destination will provide enhanced and expanded access to library services to a part of Monroe County that has been underserved.

Monroe County residents were also invited to provide input on future Library services and programming during the Library’s strategic planning process in 2020. “Guided by the community’s expressions of need, the Southwest Branch will include welcoming spaces that embrace children’s services, teen engagement, and traditional

collections and services.” Wood said.

In addition to meeting rooms, a quiet reading room, and dedicated spaces for teens and children, the new Library will feature an all-ages collaborative space and a teaching kitchen.



[Funded by a grant from the Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County](#), the kitchen will provide free, hands-on cooking and nutrition programs for all ages, increasing food security and advancing literacy, math, and science. A teaching kitchen and cooking classes were regularly requested in community conversations. This was a desire not only from adults, but from teens, as the 371 teens surveyed at Batchelor Middle School selected cooking classes as their second most desired new library feature, just behind gaming options.

The branch site was purchased this spring and Matheu Architects, PC is currently finalizing the building’s interior finishes and design development. Construction documents are now in progress. With most of the pieces in place, the final picture is coming into focus.

New renderings show the potential of the future spaces, showing off the bright, modern design and envisioning the hustle and bustle of daily life at the Library.

After a lengthy planning process, Wood says she is eager to get started on construction. “The beautiful new spaces will be a destination of choice. With the new Library, we are thrilled to expand services to a large and growing part of our community.”

Bedwell said the Friends are also excited. “We know this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to leave a legacy in our community. Our commitment to the MCPL is unwavering, and we are excited to support this new branch—now and in the future.”

To follow the progress of the Southwest Branch, visit mcpl.info/branchplan and subscribe to our [newsletter](#).

Posted by Aubrey D. on June 24, 2021 [Think Library](#)

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