Investments

‘The Friends’ supports St. Paul Library’s proposed building plan. Here’s why

By Beth Burns

In St. Paul, we have the opportunity for bold investment in our future through our public libraries. With continued challenges and uncertainty, we need trusted resources, people, and spaces to support, connect and help us move forward.

According to a recent study from the Saint Paul City Council Audit Committee, Saint Paul Public Library is the most trusted, beloved public institution in our city. When we invest in our Library, we invest in possibilities. We invest in each other.

Saint Paul Public Library has proposed a vision and direction for its facilities that is dynamic, responsive and accessible to today’s library users and to our whole community. Transformative investments in the Hayden Heights, Riverview, and Hamline Midway libraries will say, “We see you. We welcome you” to residents of all abilities, all ages, all socio-economic and education backgrounds, all races and ethnicities, all identities, all interests, and all circumstances.

Additional systemwide investments will address the need for technology-rich spaces as well as spaces for children and their adults to play and learn together.

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The Friends’ vision is for a dynamic library at the heart of every community. Our organization has a 75-year history as the Library’s (and therefore the City’s) philanthropic partner. We know there is a role for The Friends in realizing the Library’s transformative vision; we are wrapping up our own capital campaign feasibility and community engagement process to understand how The Friends can financially contribute to this effort. And, in keeping with our decades-long public-private partnership, we will also continue to advocate to local and statewide leaders for more public investment.

When we build and update buildings, we do so much more than pay for bricks and mortar. We invest in people and in neighborhoods. We invest in all our futures.

Beth Burns is president of The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library.