Southdale Library Heading For Southdale Center

Library Planned for Herberger’s Site

Construction on the new Hennepin County Library – Southdale could start in 2020, with an estimated completion in early 2022. With the new library, Southdale Center moves closer to architect Victor Gruen’s vision of a community-centered facility that provides goods, services and civic amenities that are connected to surrounding residents.

Hennepin County plans to build the library on a portion of the old Herberger’s site at Southdale Center, most visible from West 69th Street and York Avenue.

“The new site allows us to maintain our valued core services, our access to physical materials, community responsive programming and more – really, those services that patrons have come to value at the Southdale Library for a long time, but in a new secure and welcoming space,” said Interim Library Director Janet Mills.

After considering construction and operational costs, access to other services and public transportation, Hennepin County Board of Commissioners voted June 18 to negotiate a lease for the Southdale Library at Southdale Center. Patrons will be able to access the new library from both the shopping mall and parking lot.

The current proposal is for Simon Property Group, the mall property owner, to demolish the former the 300,000-square-foot Herberger’s building and construct a new building for the library and additional tenants. County staff will collaborate with Simon on the exterior of the building and will lead design efforts for the interior spaces. The new regional library is anticipated to be an anchor to a variety of uses and tenants. Simon Properties has not yet announced other tenants.

Mills says engagement with patrons and residents will pick up again this fall to refine the desired services available in the new location.

The new space will also offer a new and unique opportunity to deepen community connection and provide innovative and inclusive programs and services without a pause in service during construction.

“Building the library on a new site, instead of rebuilding on the current one, allows for almost seamless library services,” said Mills. If the library were to be rebuilt on the same York Avenue site, it would have to close for 12 to 18 months.

The Southdale Library isn’t the first library to settle in a mall. Hennepin County Spokesperson Jessica Wiens says it’s an increasing trend across the nation and can be found in malls in Seattle and McAllen, Texas. Co-locating again with the Southdale Service Center, which sits in the first level of Southdale Center, will give patrons who need to print or look up documentation a place to do so at the library, said Wiens.

“The mall becomes a single destination for a variety of stops and that’s going to be convenient for our patrons and others who may not typically visit the library if it were a standalone facility, but maybe they stop by because they were already visiting the mall,” added Mills.

Wiens said it’s too early to know what will be done with the old library site, but that the County will determine the property’s future in the coming years.

For more information, visit www.hclib.org/Southdale.
In the past few years, the City of Edina has experienced redevelopment at a pace not seen for nearly five decades. The City has used Tax-Increment Financing (TIF) on just six of more than 50 large-scale construction projects in those years. Most people aren’t experts in public finance tools, so understanding TIF can be a challenge. To help residents better understand TIF, this is the first installment of a three-part series that will explain what TIF is, how it benefits the community and the projects it has helped create.

What is TIF?
TIF stands for Tax-Increment Financing. It’s a financing method that allows the increased tax value from a newly developed property to help pay for a portion of that development or public infrastructure related to that development.

Is it only used in Edina?
No. TIF is used by communities throughout the United States. TIF was first used in Minnesota in the 1960s and has been used in Edina a handful of times since the mid-’70s.

How does it work?
When a TIF district is created, the existing property value is locked in as a base valuation. The property taxes from this base value are distributed to each of the taxing entities, such as the City, Edina Public Schools and Hennepin County. After the property in the TIF district is developed or redeveloped, its value tends to increase dramatically. The property tax money above the base value, called the “increment,” remains within the TIF district and goes to paying debt or financial obligations necessary to complete the project. Once that TIF obligation is satisfied, the entire property value returns to the tax rolls, benefiting all taxing entities.

Is TIF just taxpayer-funded subsidies for development?
The use of TIF could be viewed that way, but that’s missing the big picture. In some communities, TIF is the only way developers are willing to take on certain projects or redevelop blighted areas. In Edina, it’s used to deliver public improvements in a project, such as plazas, parks, open spaces or shared-use streets that otherwise wouldn’t happen. It’s also used to push for innovative, attractive development instead of generic residential or commercial buildings. Edina residents have demanded high-quality projects, and TIF is one way to get them without increasing the tax burden on current residents.

Are there any rules on which projects TIF can be used for?
TIF has a lot of rules. It’s governed by dozens of pages of Minnesota laws – see MN Statutes 469.174-469.1799. In addition, the City’s use is further restricted by policies established by the City Council and the Housing & Redevelopment Authority.

Do developers get a tax cut from TIF?
No. Developers who receive pledges of TIF support still have to pay the full property taxes – the base and the incremental value when they improve the site. Those tax payments aren’t discounted.

What risk does the City have from TIF?
Before TIF is allowed, it’s studied to ensure the use is legal, justified and produces results with limited risk to the City. The level of TIF assistance is determined before the project begins. Developers must complete the full project before the full TIF pledge is made.

Up next: How TIF has benefited Edina, coming in the August issue of Edition: Edina.

BY THE NUMBERS
Enterprise Facilities Off to a Strong Start

The City operates Braemar Arena and Field, Braemar Golf Course, Centennial Lakes Park, Edina Aquatic Center, Edina Art Center, Edina Liquor and Edinborough Park as “enterprises.” The City of Edina’s enterprises continue to experience growth. The Finance Department tracks the revenue and expenses for each facility, as well as the General, Utility and Liquor funds, in the Quarterly Financial Report. View past issues of the Quarterly Financial Report online at EdinaMN.gov/QFR.

Art Center staff posted nearly 1,000 instructional hours during the many classes held in the first quarter there.

Revenue made through skate rental at Centennial Lakes Park in the first part of 2019.

$47,871

$2M Amount of inventory that the Edina Liquor stores had in stock at the end of the first quarter.

76 Percentage of prime-time hours that were booked at Braemar Field in the first three months of 2019.

(Source: City of Edina Quarterly Financial Report, March 31, 2019)
City Creates Residential Rental Housing Licensing and Inspection Program

New Program to Protect Renters Goes into Effect in November

To help ensure the health, safety and welfare of renters in Edina, the City will begin a residential rental housing licensing and inspection program later this year.

The City Council at its meeting June 18 approved an ordinance necessary to implement the program. Such a program will allow the City to enact crime-free rental housing provisions and an affordable housing and tenant protection enforcement mechanism. Other cities with similar programs include Bloomington, Eden Prairie, Hopkins, Minneapolis, Richfield and St. Louis Park.

The new program will be operated by the Public Health Division of the Police Department. Two inspectors and an administrative staff person will be hired to carry it out. Annual license fees will be collected from residential rental property owners to cover their salaries and other expenses of the program.

Staff anticipates initial fees of $180 for a single-family unit and $180 plus $17 per unit for apartment buildings. Licensing will apply to property leased for 30 days or longer, as short-term residential rental is not allowed in Edina.

It is estimated that there are more than 100 apartment complexes in Edina with nearly 6,700 units and more than 1,200 single-family homes that are rented. Single-family homes would be inspected every other year. Common areas in apartment buildings would be inspected annually with a third of the city’s units inspected each year.

The program will go into effect in November.

In other business last month, the Council approved an ordinance requiring owners of existing commercial and multi-family buildings over 25,000 square feet to benchmark their buildings’ energy use through the Environmental Protection Agency’s online ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager.

The ordinance will enable the City to collect and share data on energy use of large buildings to offer guidance to building owners on sustainability updates and policies. Hennepin County has organized a collaborative and identified a contractor that will help manage the benchmarking program. In addition, CenterPoint Energy and Xcel Energy have recently made updates to their systems which will now allow buildings’ energy use information to automatically send to ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager.

ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager then compares the energy use of the building to similar buildings and gives it a benchmarking score, similar to the ENERGY STAR labels on appliances.

Building owners will receive training and onboarding support to this program through the contractor and will have access to a helpline and an online help portal. More information about the program will be mailed to businesses in early 2020.

Edina is now the second city in the state and the 31st in the nation to require owners of certain large buildings to benchmark their buildings’ energy use.

The City Council next meets 7 p.m. July 16 in the Council Chambers of Edina City Hall, 4801 W. 50th St. For more information, visit EdinaMN.gov.
North-South Trail Would Go Through 70th & Cahill Area

Three Rivers Park District Would Build Regional Trail from Crystal to Bloomington

A new 21-mile north-south regional trail would wind through Edina and connect to various trails from Crystal on the north end to the Minnesota River in Bloomington.

Segment A, the first of six sections, would travel through Edina, starting on existing trail in Bloomington and connecting to the Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail that already goes through Edina. Only 1.3 new miles of trail in Edina would be needed to complete this 7-mile segment.

“Even just that Segment A on its own will be a great amenity for anybody who currently has access to the Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail,” said Edina Transportation Planner Andrew Scipioni. “With that segment, they will be able to go from the Nine Mile Creek trail all the way to the Minnesota River.”

The Three Rivers Park District would build and maintain the entire new trail, which has a working title of “Canadian Pacific Rail Regional Trail.” The railroad is not involved in the project. The 10-foot-wide trail is expected to get a new name during the project, said Stephen Shurson, Landscape Architect for Three Rivers Park District, during a presentation to the Edina Parks & Recreation Commission.

Two routes for Segment A were originally proposed and presented to people through door-to-door surveying, online surveys, social media, mapping tools and other public engagement done by the Park District. Some of the input led to the creation of a third, now preferred option that starts at the Nine Mile Creek trail, goes west along West 70th Street, south on Cahill Road, east on Dewey Hill Road and then south on Bush Lake Road, crossing Interstate 494 before connecting with an existing trail in Bloomington. That segment would go through mostly commercial and industrial areas in Edina.

“I think it’s awesome,” said Parks & Recreation Commissioner Michael Miller. “We have no north-south corridor for biking here. … It will be a great addition to the whole regional trail.”

Commissioner Julie Strother noted the trail, which would be separated from the streets and their traffic, would be safer and draw more bicyclists, especially families.

Perhaps most excited about the idea was one of the student commission members: “I bike a lot in Edina, and I’m all for the new path,” Bryn Osborne said.

City leaders gave an initial thumbs up to the plan for Segment A, but construction is still a few years away. The master plan has to be formally approved by the Metropolitan Council and the Three Rivers board, then federal funding will be sought. The funding approval cycle usually takes two to three years. Assuming it gets funding, Three Rivers would still need to obtain an agreement with Edina to construct trail segments within the right-of-way, so construction probably would occur no earlier than 2023.

Next summer, the Three Rivers Park District plans to kick off the master plan effort for Segment B, which would run north from the Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail to the Cedar Lake Regional Trail in St. Louis Park. Other segments will go through similar public engagement and master planning.

For more information, visit threeriversparks.org.