

NEWS

New Southington Public Library set to open in November; fundraising campaign underway for furnishing

By **Ciara Hooks**, *Staff Writer*

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Construction at the new Southington Public Library building.
Contributed Photo by Southington Public Library Board

SOUTHINGTON — With the opening of the new Southington Public Library building targeted for November, the Library Board is raising funds to purchase furnishing for the facility and hopes the community will join the effort.

"The Library Board and staff have started to plan for the grand opening celebrations and are looking forward to welcoming the community into the new Southington Public Library," said Joanne Kelleher, a Southington Public Library Board member.



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The new building will be 30,000 square feet and have two floors. The first floor will include a program room, circulation workroom, lobby, friends' workroom, book sales, and more. The second floor will consist of an information office, teen room, study areas, books, and seating. Construction began in July 2023.

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The library board has organized a capital campaign to raise funds for furniture, fixtures, and equipment. The campaign's goal is \$1 million. The Town Council has asked the board to raise a minimum of \$700,000 by September.

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"The library is on track to open in late November," Kelleher said. "September is when the library board was asked to meet one of the fundraising goals."

The campaign's first phase raised more than \$620,000 as of late June due largely to generous supporters.

With the campaign's public phase underway, community members have the opportunity to be recognized for their support of the project with their name on a plaque to be displayed in the new building as well as on benches, study areas, and rooms. Customized bricks will be installed on the patio next spring.

The Community Foundation of Greater New Britain, which is managing donations and pledges through a fund started over 15 years ago, has been one of the campaign's lead donors. The community room will be named for the foundation in recognition of its support. The children's program space will be named for the Main Street Community Foundation. Contributions from the Friends of the Southington Public Library will be recognized with the naming of the new bookstore.

"We hope that families, clubs, or other organizations will take advantage of these opportunities to have their name associated with this exciting project," said Mary Baker, a member of the Library Board and the Building Committee.

In 2021, Southington voters overwhelmingly approved a \$16.9 million referendum to fund the construction of a new library and the demolition of the existing facility.

The existing 21,000-square-foot facility was built in 1974 to accommodate a population of 33,600. As of 2019, the population had increased by nearly 30 percent to 43,800.

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The Town Council-appointed Building Committee developed a plan to maximize the physical building space. In 2023, a \$5 million state grant was obtained to increase the square footage and improve the architectural features of the building. The grant did not cover funding for furniture and fixtures inside the larger space.

In addition to providing space for library services to grow with the town's population and needs, the project addresses five issues: expanded space for children and teens,

meeting and workspaces for individuals and groups, acoustical separation for noisy and quiet spaces, a fully accessible and code-compliant building, and efficient building systems.

Southington Public Library and Barnes Museum Executive Director Thomas Piezzo said, "The staff and I are very excited for what the new library will offer Southington: much more space for meetings, programs, seating, and collections in a comfortable, inviting, and efficient building."

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Ciara Hooks is a reporter with the Record-Journal. She has been with Hearst Connecticut Media Group since 2024. When not working, she can be found trying out the many great restaurants in the state, shopping, listening to music and spending time with family.

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