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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Press Release

Shaker Heights Public Library Board Votes to Move Forward with the Bertram Woods Branch Repairs and Renovation

At its March 21, 2022 meeting, the Shaker Heights Public Library Board of Trustees voted unanimously to move forward with the renovation of the Bertram Woods Branch.

In May 2018 the library passed a 1.9-mill operating levy to fund operating expenses and to renovate both library buildings. The Main Library renovation was completed in December 2021 and the library initially planned to begin the design for the Bertram Woods Branch renovation in mid-2020 to coincide with the beginning of Main Library construction. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a delay to the project until July 2021.

As design of the Main Library began in early 2019, the City of Shaker Heights, the Shaker Heights City Schools, and the Shaker Heights Public Library also began a unique collaboration called "Forward Together" to create a shared vision for community facilities. In 2021 the City, Schools, and Library jointly funded a process to develop a Coordinated Facilities Master Plan. To allow full consideration of the Bertram Woods branch in this Master Plan, the Board of Trustees agreed to delay renovation until receipt of an interim report in December 2021.

The Forward Together consultant team completed facility assessments of city, library, and school buildings; created cost estimates for both renovating and building new facilities; sought and received robust community input in October 2021 and February-March 2022; and developed concepts for community discussion.

Although the library had originally budgeted \$2 million for the branch repairs and renovation, the northeast Ohio construction market has seen an almost 30% increase in construction costs in the last 18 months, resulting in an updated estimate of approximately \$2.5 million for project construction.

The Forward Together collaboration and process is of great value to the community and the library remains an eager and supportive partner. One early positive outcome of this collaboration for the Library and the Shaker Schools was the decision to relocate the offices for the Shaker Heights Schools Family and Community Engagement and Registrar from the District administration building to the second floor of the renovated Main Library. This move gives families more comprehensive access to both library and school services.

After a review of the concepts and assessments provided by Forward Together, the Library Board considered its options and voted unanimously to move forward with repairing and renovating the Bertram Woods Branch as the fiscally responsible and environmentally sustainable thing to do.

“The branch needs repairs now and it is essential to maximize the impact of our funds, which continue to be subject to rising inflation,” commented Library Director Amy Switzer.

The proposed project schedule is 15 months, which includes six months for design time and nine months for construction. Bertram Woods Branch will be closed during the construction phase as staying open would add several months to the construction schedule and significantly increase costs.

According to Library Board President Mike Bertsch, “At this time and based on what we learned in the Forward Together process, the Library Board recommends moving forward with the Bertram Woods Branch repairs and renovation immediately, while continuing our full participation in and support of the Forward Together initiative.”

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The Board Resolution in the March 2022 Minutes

Whereas the Shaker Heights Public Library Board sought and received a 1.9-mill operating levy in 2018 to renovate its buildings as well as support library operations, and

Whereas the Shaker Heights Public Library Board oversaw the completion of the renovation of the Main Library in December 2021, and

Whereas the Shaker Heights Public Library Board values its strong relationships and creative collaboration with the City and the Schools, and

Whereas the Shaker Heights Public Library Board supports the Forward Together Vision Plan of 2019 and the goal of providing community facilities that gather people, connect places, utilize assets, and collaborate broadly, and

Whereas the Shaker Heights Public Library Board delayed the repairs and renovation of the Bertram Woods Branch to fully participate in the Forward Together Coordinated Facilities Master Plan, and

Whereas the Shaker Heights Public Library Board is committed to supporting and participating in Forward Together as we look at facilities and beyond, to ensure Shaker Heights is a healthy and vibrant community, and

Whereas the Shaker Heights Public Library Board carefully considered possibilities, including incorporating a branch inside a new community/recreation facility at the current middle school site, if such a facility is undertaken in the future, as well as renovating and modernizing the existing Bertram Woods Branch, and

Whereas the Shaker Heights Public Library Board recognizes that repairing and renovating the Bertram Woods Branch with the funds already allocated is the fiscally responsible and environmentally sustainable course of action, now, therefore, be it

Resolved that the Shaker Heights Public Library Board of Trustees hereby authorizes the repair and renovation of the Bertram Woods Branch, with a budget not to exceed three million dollars.