



April 15, 2022

Hamline Midway Coalition
Board of Directors

Dear Mr. Foss and Hamline Midway Coalition Board of Directors:

We have received your letter and requests regarding the Hamline Midway Library design project.

Process Thus Far

Saint Paul Public Library (SPPL) has been working since 2019 to identify capital investment priorities, build the case for investment, and secure resources to advance projects that improve the lives of residents in Saint Paul. Community input has been integral throughout. The Hamline Midway Library is one of three libraries identified as highest priority for investment in Saint Paul.

This year, the community engagement process has already engaged over 800 Hamline Midway Library residents and users through surveys, pop up meetings, virtual and in-person events, hands-on tabletop design activities, and more. HMC has been invited to be part of this – invited to help promote, attend, and lead engagement events and activities. In addition to community engagement, the schematic design process includes detailed building assessments that give us a detailed understanding of issues and options.

The guiding question of SPPL and LSE's process might be stated as, **"How might we – within the allocated resources – create the best possible Hamline Midway Library that delivers a safe, inviting, affirming, and comfortable library for people of all cultures, abilities, and communities?"** Within this big vision, LSE as the architecture and design partner has been exploring a variety of architectural concepts that respond to the wide variety of opinions in the community.

Saint Paul Public Library and LSE professionals – a team of nearly all women and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color – have been cursed out, intimidated, demeaned, and bullied in this process while performing their professional duties. This is not acceptable. We all share a goal of bringing many voices to the table. We all share a goal of investing in the Hamline Midway Library as a public space. We invite the Hamline Midway Coalition to support us in holding boundaries for respectful and welcoming civil discourse that honors the full range of perspectives neighbors have on this topic.

Libraries are a source of trusted information, and SPPL's Transforming Libraries webpage thoroughly and publicly documents the facts of the process and project thus far.



Scope for this Project

As City government, we frequently receive feedback – including from Project Ambassadors on this effort – that it is critical for us to be clear on what is in scope for consideration when we seek community input. Library and City administration have been clear and consistent that the following items are not under consideration on this project:

- The City purchasing new or additional property.
- Moving the library to another location.
- Re-starting the community engagement process.
- Exceeding the existing budget for engagement.

The Library and the City operate in a resource-constrained environment, particularly around capital investments. Each of these suggestions adds significant costs in an environment when construction costs are escalating dramatically over time. Interrupting the process does not bring us any closer to improving the library for the community and for the staff who work there.

Recommendation

The invitation to the open house on April 23 is open to everyone. That event is the opportunity for everyone to review together what has been heard so far from community members regarding the priorities and features of a transformed Hamline Midway Library; review and provide feedback on the updated building design concepts that respond to community input and the community-informed vision for libraries in Saint Paul; and learn more about the high-level costs associated with each building concept.

This feedback will inform decision-making on direction. Because SPPL has not yet decided on direction, allowing this exploration and input process to unfold is necessary to come to a decision. We hope you all attend and advertise this event

Thank you for your collaboration on this project and your work on behalf of the Hamline Midway neighborhood.

Jaime Tincher
Deputy Mayor

Cc: Catherine Penkert, Director of Saint Paul Public Library