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VILLAGE OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

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December 8, 2025

Montgomery County Library Board
21 Maryland Avenue
Suite 310
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Library Board:

We write as the Development Committee of the Friendship Heights Village Council to strongly endorse the inclusion of a new **Montgomery County Public Library and performing arts center** in the revised Friendship Heights Sector Plan. This vision reflects a clear and growing desire among our residents and aligns with broader County goals for equity, community infrastructure, and inclusive growth.

Friendship Heights is uniquely positioned to support such a facility: we are a **transit-oriented, high-density, intergenerational community**, with a large naturally occurring retirement population, and increasing plans for infill development. A public library and arts center would fulfill critical **educational, cultural, and social needs** while also serving as an economic and civic anchor.

We respectfully request that the Library Board consider this facility as a **key amenity** in the Sector Plan, allocate resources to advancing it, and partner with Montgomery Planning, the Council, and other stakeholders to bring this vision to life.

Why Friendship Heights Needs a Public Library & Performing Arts Center

Here are the detailed reasons why such a facility would benefit our community, with justifications drawing on the model of the **Brigadier General Charles E. McGee Library** in Silver Spring:

1. Cultural, Educational, and Community Resource Needs

- A combined library and arts center would serve as a **vibrant gathering place** for all ages, supporting lifelong learning, literacy, and creative expression.
- The **McGee Library** in Silver Spring (63,000 sq ft) provides meeting rooms, quiet study, collaboration spaces, a business center, and an Early Literacy Center. [Montgomery County Maryland+1](#)
- Such a model offers **multigenerational programming**, from story times for children to maker spaces, arts workshops, and performance events — enhancing civic engagement.

2. Equity in Access

- Many Friendship Heights residents, particularly older adults, rely heavily on **accessible public amenities**. A local library ensures equitable service without long, difficult travel.
- The County's own facilities plan previously set a guideline that library service should be no more than **5 miles in urban areas** for 80% of residents. [Montgomery County Maryland](#)
- While past county documents have cited a **5-mile guideline** for branch spacing, this is a general standard, not an absolute rule. For example, the **Chevy Chase Library** (8005 Connecticut Avenue) [Montgomery County Maryland+1](#), **Connie Morella Library** in Bethesda (7400 Arlington Road) [Montgomery County Maryland+1](#), and **Little Falls Library** (5501 Massachusetts Avenue) [Montgomery County Maryland+1](#) all serve relatively nearby communities, illustrating that rigid five-mile spacing is neither strictly enforced nor always appropriate given demographic and density realities.

3. Serving an Aging Population & Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC)

- Friendship Heights has the second largest concentration of seniors in the Washington DC region after Leisure World: according to recent

data, about **33 percent of residents are age 65 or older**. [Village of Friendship Heights](#)

- Moreover, our community has incredibly high life expectancy: data shows that residents here (specifically Friendship Village) live on average to **96.1 years**, making it one of the longest-lived neighborhoods. [The Business Times+1](#) A local library offers **age-friendly services**: accessible technology, assistive devices, programming, and social engagement.
- For many seniors aging in place, proximity to a library reduces isolation, provides increased social opportunities, supports mental health, and provides educational and recreational resources in a familiar, walkable location.

4. Responding to Current and Future Density

- Friendship Heights is one of Montgomery County's **four downtowns** and is undergoing a sector plan update that anticipates increasing density and mixed-use development. [Montgomery Planning+1](#)
- Our current population is already very dense: Friendship Heights Village has a **population density over 90,000 people per square mile**, among the highest in the U.S. [Wikipedia](#)
- As infill development continues, including more housing and possibly more families, a library will be a **critical public amenity** to match that growth.

5. Attracting Families and Children

- While a significant portion of our community is older, we also have a desire to attract more **families with children**. A high-quality library and arts center is a powerful draw for families seeking a neighborhood with strong educational and cultural infrastructure.
- The neighborhood has seen an increase in families with children, and a library will further encourage family-oriented growth.
- Programming like story times, youth workshops, tutoring, and arts education helps build a sense of community and supports child development.

6. Proximity to Transit and Community Hub

- A new facility could be **located adjacent to the Metro station** (Friendship Heights Red Line) and **near the Montgomery County Community Center (Wisconsin Place)**, making it highly accessible.
- This location would maximize foot traffic, minimize car dependence, and serve as a **civic anchor** in a transit-oriented development.

7. Economic Benefits

- A library and arts center can act as a **catalyst for local economic activity**, increasing foot traffic to nearby retail, restaurants, and businesses.
- It can also support workforce development: the McGee Library, for instance, offers a business center, computers, and collaboration space. [Montgomery County Maryland](#)
- The facility could attract grant funding, philanthropic partnerships, and public investment, amplifying its economic impact.

8. High Educational Attainment & Community Capacity

- Our community is highly educated: in the Sector Plan's existing-conditions analysis, **85% of residents age 25+ have at least a bachelor's degree**, and **59% hold graduate or professional degrees**. [Montgomery Planning](#)
- Such a community is likely to robustly use and support a rich library resource, both in programming and in volunteer or philanthropic engagement.

9. Civic Identity and Legacy

- Naming or designing a center with the character of the McGee Library model would honor service, creativity, and community. The McGee Library is a model: named for a Tuskegee Airman, it embodies values of education, service, and inclusion. [Wikipedia+1](#)
- A performing arts component can celebrate local talent, offer performance space, and strengthen community identity.

Conclusion & Request

In summary, a public library and performing arts center in Friendship Heights would:

- Enhance educational access for all ages, especially our older adults and growing number of families.
- Meet equity goals by reducing barriers to cultural and civic infrastructure.
- Support the neighborhood's planned growth and densification while anchoring community life.
- Drive economic and social benefits, increasing foot traffic, encouraging local business, and building civic cohesion.
- Provide unmatched cultural, educational, and social value to our community

We respectfully urge the Library Board to prioritize this facility in its planning and capital strategy. Partnering with Montgomery Planning and the Friendship Heights Village Council, we believe this project can be a signature piece of the Friendship Heights Sector Plan — one that helps our area thrive now and long into the future.

Thank you for your attention and consideration. We stand ready to assist in community engagement, fundraising, design input, or any other role to support this vision.

Sincerely,



Roy Schaeffer, Mayor
Village of Friendship Heights