

Press Release

South Orange Public Library

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September 28, 2022



For Immediate Release

**South Orange Public Library Board
Selects Architect for Library Modernization**



The Connett Building, part of the SOPL Complex, to be connected via a link to the currently operating Library

SOUTH ORANGE, NJ – The South Orange Public Library’s quest for a transformative makeover of the current facility is gaining speed. Library trustees voted unanimously on September 20 to engage the award-winning New York City-based firm Andrew Berman Architect.

The design process will begin immediately and is expected to move swiftly as extensive planning, including considerable public input, has already taken place. The firm will be charged with improving accessibility, functionality, sustainability and adaptability, while inspiring patrons with a dynamic, future-oriented design. Design development should be complete by Spring 2023.

“Andrew Berman stood out for his ability to create inspiring design solutions for complex institutional programs and sites,” said Library Board President Hildy Karp. “The firm easily met all our criteria, including having vast library experience and a record of exceeding client expectations.”

In a stroke of serendipity, Andrew Berman is already familiar with the Village and the Library, having spent his middle and high school years in South Orange. “I still remember looking through every art book on the shelves and borrowing LP records,” said Berman. “Through design, the significance of the library should be able to be felt more emphatically in the local context of the Village... The reimagined library should be accessible, welcoming, and foster a desire to discover and self-navigate.”

The Library trustees selected Berman following a competitive and thorough review process conducted by a nine-member Building Advisory Committee composed of Library board members, Library Director Jill Faherty, Village trustees, Village staff and three architect volunteers from the community. The Committee was unanimous in its recommendation to the Library Board.

“The re-imagining of the library will be a game-changer for the programming, services and spaces we are able to offer our patrons,” said Faherty. “Everyone in South Orange will want to see and be seen at the library. We cannot wait to get started!”

With a projected price tag of \$14-17.5 million, the project became feasible only once SOPL secured a \$6.5 million grant from the State in January 2022. Village leadership, which enthusiastically supports the library modernization, committed to match the State grant for a total of up to \$16.5 million. Additional funds will be raised by the Foundation for the South Orange Public Library, with ongoing support for collections and programs from the Friends of the South Orange Public Library.

“The library is destined to become the civic and cultural centerpiece of a newly thriving downtown. We’ve been working on this for quite a while. I am confident that in Andrew Berman Architect we have selected the perfect team for the job,” said South Orange Village Trustee Karen Hilton, who is also a director on the Foundation for the South Orange Public Library’s board.

This project is supported by funds from the New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act, administered by the New Jersey State Library.



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