



## News Release

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### **CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG LIBRARY MAKES CHANGES TO ALIGN WITH ITS COMMITMENT TO EXPANDING EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Initiative Includes Formation of Racial Equity Task Force, Renaming of Library Branch

**Charlotte, NC – October 19, 2020** – Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is making changes within its system to align with its commitment to expanding equity, diversity and inclusion. The effort includes the formation of the Racial Equity Task Force, renaming Morrison Regional Library branch and removing the effects of racism and injustice within the library and its 20 branch locations to ensure a welcoming environment for all residents.

“Systemic racism and inequity have no place in public libraries other than as recorded history to remind us how we got to this moment in time,” said Charlotte Mecklenburg Library CEO Lee Keesler. “As a trusted institution, we are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone in our community.”

An early step in this work was Keesler’s convening of an internal legacy audit to review commemorations and collectibles to ensure they align with the Library’s position on equity. In addition, Keesler recently announced the formation of the Racial Equity Task Force. Co-chaired by former Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Board of Trustees Chair Rob Harrington and Library Chief Customer Officer/Library Director Caitlin Moen, the new Task Force builds on the Library’s existing Diversity & Equity Action Team’s work with goals to expand equity, diversity and inclusion throughout the Library system.

The Library Board of Trustees took immediate action in approving the priority removal, relocation or renaming of 10 commemorations throughout the system whose history, meaning or presence does not align with the Library’s current position on racism and inequity. Among the changes is the renaming of Morrison Regional Library to SouthPark Regional Library.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library worked closely with the Harris family, who in 1989 generously donated the land on which the Morrison Regional Library sits, to re-name the branch the SouthPark Regional Library. The library branch was originally named in honor of their grandfather, Governor Cameron A. Morrison.

“We remain as committed to building a stronger Charlotte-Mecklenburg today as we did when we gifted land more than 30 years ago for a needed library,” said Johnny Harris. “Our family and Charlotte Mecklenburg Library share a mutual pride in strengthening our community, and we recognize that our libraries are a wonderful benefit to county residents.”

The Harris family’s civic leadership is well regarded, said Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Board of Trustees Chair Joe Helweg. “We’re grateful for how the Harris family’s generous gift of land helped build the Library’s ability to reach further into the community and appreciate their ongoing collaboration,” said Helweg. “Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is committed to thoughtfully and intentionally contributing services, programs and resources to our community that are inclusive and equitable.”

Over the coming months, signage at the branch location and across all Library materials will be updated to reflect the new name of SouthPark Regional Library, and the Library staff will continue to remove and relocate collectibles throughout the system as recommended by the audit.

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#### **About Charlotte Mecklenburg Library:**

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is one of America’s leading urban public libraries, serving a community of more

than one million citizens in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. Through 20 locations, targeted outreach and online resources, the Library delivers exceptional services and programs, with a mission to improve lives and build a stronger community. For more, visit [cmlibrary.org](http://cmlibrary.org).

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