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Contacts: Paul Burns (502) 574-1683 [Office]

## **Middletown Library to reopen, reduced hours and employees**

### **Actions are result of ongoing budget challenges**

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (August 2, 2019)** – Following weeks of conversations with Metro Councilmembers and the City of Middletown about potential alternative sites for the Middletown Library, the Library announced today it would reopen the branch in its former location in the East Government Center in September, as soon as materials can be transferred and staff for the location can be hired.

“No viable sites or ones at little to no cost have been identified at this time,” said Library Director Lee Burchfield. “Therefore, we will be reopening the Middletown Library in its former location.”

The Middletown Library closed on June 20 as part of Metro Government’s ongoing budget challenges, driven largely by the increase in the state pension bill and Metro Council’s vote to not increase revenue. At that time, all of the branch employees were re-assigned, and books and materials were distributed to other locations. Shortly after the closing, Metro Council passed a budget amendment that allotted “\$412,500 to reopen the library operations at the Middletown Branch,” and stated that “the continuation of the Middletown Branch Library is contingent upon securing a signed partnership agreement with the City of Middletown or another entity providing space at no cost or de minimis cost for the Library by December 31, 2019.”

“Among the sacrifices taxpayers are making given the funding constraints without new revenue sources, I do not believe reopening a library located less than 5 miles from a brand-new regional library is the best use of limited resources that will likely be further reduced in subsequent years,” said Mayor Greg Fischer. “Council’s decision to temporarily reopen the Middletown Library is not fiscally responsible and deepens inequities across our community. However, it is part of the budget they approved so it is the executive branch’s responsibility to implement that budget.”

“Council’s decision to fund the temporary reopening of the Middletown Library reverses a portion of the challenging work of balancing a budget under the pressure of our ballooning pension bill from Frankfort,” said Louisville Metro’s Chief Financial Officer Daniel Frockt. He continued, “This budget is a multi-year challenge that, without new revenue, will create a domino effect and will be felt in all areas of our city.”

Reopening the Middletown Library in September is contingent on the hiring of additional personnel and the moving of books and other materials back into the space. The \$412,500 allotted by Metro Council’s budget amendment was insufficient to fully fund staffing and operation of the Middletown Library for the entire fiscal year. As a

result, the branch will operate at reduced hours—40 hours, five days per week—and at lower staffing levels. The site will offer book services including book drop, book reserve pickups, and a limited browsing collection, in addition to computer access. At the end of the fiscal year, when Metro Government’s lease on the East Government Center facility expires, the Middletown Library will either close again, or have to be relocated if funds are available.

“Libraries are a critical resource in our community,” said the Mayor. “They contribute greatly to our city’s core value of lifelong learning.”

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