



The Thurston Nature Center will be partially demolished for the construction of the new Thurston School. ANNABELLA MI

The Gilbane project: a community divided

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In 2019, Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS) approved a \$1 billion school bond, designed to be utilized over 30 years for the renovations of existing public schools. Gilbane Building Company was unanimously chosen to lead the first phase of the bond initiative, spanning from 2019-2026. By September 2024, Gilbane and AAPS convened a meeting to present and discuss the next phase of the project, aiming to renovate Thurston Elementary School.

The plan will be launched in March 2025, starting with building a new Thurston building 35 feet away from the current one. Students will continue attending their classes in the original

building during construction. After the new building is complete, students will be attending school there while the original is demolished.

However, the construction of the new building requires the demolition of the Thurston Nature Center's rain gardens and other natural habitats. Additionally, the building would be moved closer to the pond in the Nature Center. This has caused concern to arise over the plans to have specific portions of the Nature Center demolished, such as some foliage and the rain gardens. Many have also expressed concern over the impact this will have on the pond and the animals around it.

The chair of the Nature Center, Praveena J. Ramaswami, views the Nature

Center as a cornerstone of the community, highlighting its status as one of the nation's oldest environmental education centers.

"That is a unique experience, to be able to see all kinds of play around you and wonder," Ramaswami said. "And I think for this community, I think most of us are mourning the loss of that experience that future generations will never have in the same way that our children have had."

Lia Rose, the parent of two Thurston alumni who were students at the time the bond was approved, shared with The Michigan Daily that she had no knowledge of the project's plans until September of this year. In response to concerns raised by her and other parents,

Gilbane organized a meeting where participants expressed optimism for having the opportunity to share feedback.

After the meeting, Rose reached out to Sarah Devereaux, a current Thurston parent and trustee for Superior Township, and discovered that her frustrations were also shared by others. In an interview, Devereaux explained that their discussion led to the creation of Let Thurston Play, a group of parents and community members united in their concerns about the Gilbane project.

Let Thurston Play proposed an alternative plan involving the staging of Thurston students at Logan Elementary, while the old Thurston is demolished and reconstructed, reducing the

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**LAND OF
STORIES:
BOOK REVIEW**

An annual event returns to Clague grounds: the Scholastic Book Fair

**VIOLET KANG,
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JESSIE GUO**
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An event took place at the Clague Middle School library from Dec. 9 to 13 — the Scholastic Book Fair. During the event, a wide variety of exciting items were available for purchase, featuring popular titles like "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" and "Dork Diaries," including new additions to

these series. Other favorites included stationery, a diverse assortment of pens, pencils, erasers, fun-shaped highlighters, and a personal favorite, the "Chocolate Calculator."

"Overall, the book fair is a win-win situation," Clague Librarian Kim McLean said. "Because not only do students have the chance to choose books to read and to build their home library, but the library receives 25 to 50 percent of

each purchase (depending on final sales) that comes back to us to purchase books that will be added to the Clague Library! We also had a lot of excitement around our pencil pull."

There were a variety of posters available, Hello Kitty, Spider-Man, Minecraft, Pusheen, you name it. One fun event involved trying to win said posters. To participate, students could donate money to the book fair and pick

a pencil from the "Giving Tree." If lucky enough, some would find a pencil with red tape at the bottom, indicating that they had won a poster. This was a fun way to support the book fair while contributing to a good cause.

"I thought it was wonderful to see so many students buying books that bring smiles to their faces," Clague Library Clerk Allison Jeter said.



Pictured above are the dates for the Scholastic Book Fair's hours, Dec. 9 to 12. ANNABELLA MI