



# Development of visitor center is progressing

A new facility that will offer enhanced amenities to all visitors is coming to Monticello.

Groundbreaking is scheduled for November on a 40,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art visitor and history education center to be built at the site of Monticello's existing Ticket Office and Shuttle Station. Preliminary site work and the installation of temporary facilities will begin in early summer, but Monticello's entrance and exit roads will stay in service and much of the current parking area will remain unchanged throughout the project.

For the past two years, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation has been engaged in extensive planning, rezoning, and design work on the center. "The planning and design process has been a great collaboration among Foundation trustees, staff members at all levels, and the design consultants," said Kat Imhoff, Monticello's vice president for planning and facilities.

The architect for the center is Ayers/Saint/Gross, Architects + Planners, an internationally known firm with offices in Baltimore and Washington. Adam Gross, the firm's design principal, is leading the team, with Sandra P. Vicchio as project manager.

The landscape architect is Michael Vergason, founding partner of Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Ltd., of Arlington. Barton Malow Company, a Southfield, Mich., firm with an office in Charlottesville, is the building contractor.

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Ayers/Saint/Gross and TF

**This architect's rendering shows an aerial view of the planned visitor center.**

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Monticello



## Visitor Center

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The Ayers/Saint/Gross design calls for a tiered complex of five buildings – constructed of fieldstone, cedar, and glass – tucked into the slope of the mountain.

The center's structures will be connected around a shady central courtyard by sky-lit pergolas and covered walkways. While it will



**An artist's view of the south side of the planned visitor center, featuring the two-story Hunter and Carl Smith History Center.**

include a fountain and several trees, the courtyard also will serve as a “green” roof over storage and staff facilities on the level below.

The reception pavilion, where visitor information and admission tickets will be available, will be located on the corner nearest the visitor parking area. Visitors will be greeted either inside the handicapped-accessible pavilion or at walk-up windows facing the entrance pergola.

The two-story Hunter and Carl Smith History Center will form the south face of the complex. On the lower level, it will contain facilities for Monticello's education programs, including three classrooms and the Griffin Discovery Room, a hands-on activity center for young learners. Above, directly off the courtyard, there will be a 100-seat multipurpose theater, where a brief orientation film will be shown.

Toward the back corner of the courtyard, a small café will provide visitors with new and expanded food and beverage options.

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## Visitor Center

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Umbrella tables on a terrazzo and counter seating on an elevated wooden deck will complement an indoor seating area.

Anchoring the back of the complex, a two-story exhibition pavilion will rise over the courtyard to the shuttle bus landing situated above. The center's most dramatic structure, this building will contain space for both permanent and changing exhibitions.

The fifth main element of the center will be a retail pavilion, featuring a meadow-grass roof at the level of the shuttle bus landing. In addition to providing a large and attractive venue for the Monticello Museum Shop, the building will include a garden shop with indoor and outdoor spaces and a location for regional travel information.

In the final phase of the project, an existing parking lot will be converted into a woodland walkway that will connect the new center and Monticello's African-American Burial Ground.

Unseen but essential to operations, the entire complex will be wired for the latest digital technology. As part of its certification under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program, the center will be heated and cooled using ground-source heat pump technology. Along with its two "green" roofs, the center will incorporate many other eco-friendly features.

Fund raising for the center's construction and an operating endowment is under way, with a goal of almost \$50 million, \$10 million of which is endowment.

"This is without a doubt the most important project at Monticello in memory," said Daniel P. Jordan, president of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. "This new center represents our very best effort to advance the Foundation's mission of preservation and education and to provide all of our visitors with the finest in facilities and amenities."

— MIKE MERRIAM  
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director of construction management.*

**COMMENTS? [newsletter@monticello.org](mailto:newsletter@monticello.org)**