

# New Facility For Area Food Bank Is Planned

Construction Is Set To Start in Summer; \$28 Million Raised

By Philip Rucker  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Wednesday, April 30, 2008; B01

The [Capital Area Food Bank](#) will begin construction this summer on an expansive facility in Northeast Washington after some of the region's leading philanthropists announced yesterday that they have raised \$28.7 million for the project.

The nonprofit food bank is the region's primary distribution center, providing food to about 700 agencies and soup kitchens, which face rising demand during the economic downturn. The facility, which will replace the current building, will double the food bank's storage capacity, be equipped to prepare hot meals in a commercial kitchen and accept bulk shipments of such staples as rice, pasta and beans.

Construction is scheduled to begin as soon as June on eight acres a half-mile from the current food bank warehouse. Food bank officials said they hope to raise more money from the community to meet their \$36 million goal for the "Til No One Is Hungry capital campaign.

It was announced yesterday that [J.W. Marriott Jr.](#), chairman and chief executive of [Marriott International](#), donated an additional \$1 million, bringing his gift to more than \$3 million.

A center in the new building for the hundreds of food bank volunteers will carry the name of the patriarch of the Bethesda-based hotel empire.

Marriott said that food is at "the center of everything we do" and that he is passionate about eliminating hunger. "People cannot lead productive lives without food," Marriott said.

The announcement was made at a luncheon at [The Washington Post](#)'s downtown headquarters hosted by [Donald E. Graham](#), The Washington Post Co.'s chairman and chief executive. Graham serves as co-chairman of the capital campaign with Marriott, [Washington Wizards](#) owner [Abe Pollin](#) and radio executive Bennett Zier.

Dozens of philanthropists, business leaders, and government agency and elected officials attended the event.

Graham said the food bank serves an indispensable role in the Washington region, where about 633,000 residents -- 200,000 of them children -- are at risk of hunger. He said he hopes the new facility will help "break the cycle of poverty for our neighbors."

"We can all argue about our charitable priorities in the Washington area, but no one who has walked and driven around the city can possibly disagree that generosity has to start with feeding people," Graham said.

Lynn Brantley, president and chief executive of the food bank, said hunger in the region has been exacerbated by the economic downturn. Demand at some soup kitchen agencies has risen as high as 80 percent in recent months, she said.

"You have this perfect storm happening, so the demand on the food bank is enormous," Brantley said. "It's going to be very, very tough in the short term."

But she said the new facility at Sixth Street NE, near the [Fort Totten](#) Metro station, will help meet that demand by allowing the warehouse to store bulk food and serve hot meals.

In a plea for more donations, Brantley said: "The urgency is now. There's no question."

The 125,000-square-foot facility will enable the food bank to accept 40 million pounds of food each year. It includes a significantly expanded refrigerator and freezer space so the food bank can store more fresh produce, meat, dairy products and other perishables.

The building was designed with environmentally friendly features, including a \$1 million solar panel roof, donated by [BP America](#). The facility's design meets the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification standards set by the [U.S. Green Building Council](#).

The "green" features are expected to save the food bank about \$70,000 in annual energy costs.

"We're trying to design it right so that it's sustainable for the future," said [Brian Smith](#), the food bank's chief operating officer.

*To donate to the 'Til No One Is Hungry capital campaign, contact the Capital Area Food Bank at 202-526-5344 or <http://www.capitalareafoodbank.org>.*