



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 22, 2018

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL AND CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARIES BREAK GROUND ON THE RENOVATION
OF WHITNEY M. YOUNG, JR. LIBRARY**

\$12 million investment will bring expanded, modern branch to the Chatham neighborhood

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today joined Alderman Roderick Sawyer, Chicago Public Library Commissioner Brian Bannon and Public Building Commission Executive Director Carina Sanchez to break ground on the complete renovation and modernization of the Whitney M. Young, Jr. Library at 7901 S. King Drive. The \$12 million investment will incorporate the exterior walls of the existing structure into the envelope of the new building to create a modern, state-of-the-art branch.

“Once renovated and expanded, the Whitney M. Young, Jr. Library branch will be a community fixture for Chatham residents to read, learn, discover, and explore,” said Mayor Emanuel. “What Chatham will become someday is now today, and I look forward to the continued growth and development in this historic community.”

The new branch will provide the neighborhood with a modern library space that continues to serve as an essential community anchor, providing critical services and resources to meet a variety of local needs. It will feature an Early Learning play space for children, YOUmedia digital lab for teens, additional seating, state-of-the-art furniture and equipment, meeting and study spaces, expanded computer access and ADA accessibility throughout the building.

“The revitalization of critical neighborhood assets like the Whitney Young Library branch are paramount for our Chatham residents,” said Alderman Roderick Sawyer, 6th Ward. “This investment in the library’s facilities and infrastructure will provide our patrons with safe learning and gathering spaces for the children and families of this community.”

Whitney Young Branch will also be one of three Experience Labs. In October of last year, Mayor Emanuel along with David L. Cohen announced that Comcast would be making a \$250,000 Internet Essentials investment with the Chicago Public Library Foundation bringing together three CPL programs into unique “Experience Labs” powered by Internet Essentials for Chicagoans of all ages to enjoy. Current programming includes YOUmedia, CyberNavigator digital skills tutoring for adults, and Maker Lab programming. Whitney Young will be one of only three other locations outside of HWLC to currently offer Maker Lab programs.

“We are thrilled to build this much-needed and highly anticipated branch for the Chatham community,” said CPL Commissioner Brian Bannon. “The expanded building will bring a modern state-of-the-art facility that meets the needs of all our library patrons.”

The project, which will be managed by the Public Building Commission (PBC), includes a 2,800 square foot expansion of the branch. The building will be retrofitted for energy efficient mechanical systems and improved lighting.

“This is not a complete tear down and rebuild. Due to a high-quality original design and ‘good bones,’ the existing building is an ideal candidate for a gut renovation and expansion,” Carina E. Sanchez, Executive Director, PBC said. “This project will enhance the quality and architectural design of the neighborhood, provide jobs during the construction period and leave the community with enhanced library resources.”

The exterior walls of the existing structure will remain in place, allowing CPL and PBC to do a complete gut rehab and expansion. In addition, the new design creates a welcoming and flexible space that provides access to library services for residents of all ages while responding to the current and evolving needs of the community.

“It is an honor to be able to design a community-oriented library in the Chatham and Park Manor neighborhood,” Frank Christopher Lee, Principal of Johnson & Lee, said. “This new construction will give the community a 21st century library that provides the very type of unique community perspective of design that can serve as a benchmark for future projects.”

Development of the project will be managed by the PBC, while Johnson & Lee, LTD, a full-service Chicago-based MBE architectural firm, serves as the Architect of Record.

Since 2011, the City of Chicago has invested over \$200 million to enhance library buildings and services. CPL announced multiple modernization and infrastructure projects at neighborhood libraries, including Chicago Bee and Kelly branches and a new branch in the West Loop. CPL also announced a first of its kind partnership with Chicago Housing Authority to co-locate four libraries and renovate a fifth.

The modernization project is one of many ongoing investments in Chatham, including the Cottage Grove streetscape improvement project, from 77th to 83rd Streets, and the Chatham Retail Thrive Zone, which helps support neighborhoods economic development.

About Chicago Public Library

Since 1873, Chicago Public Library (CPL) has encouraged lifelong learning by welcoming all people and offering equal access to information, entertainment and knowledge through innovative services and programs, as well as cutting-edge technology. Through its 80 locations, the Library provides free access to a rich collection of materials, both physical and digital, and presents the highest quality author discussions, exhibits and programs for children, teens and adults. CPL received the Social Innovator Award from Chicago Innovation Awards; won a National Medal for Library Services from the Institute for Museum and Library Services; was named the first ever winner of the National Summer Learning Association’s Founder’s Award in recognition of its Summer

Learning Challenge; and was ranked number one in the U.S., and third in the world by an international study of major urban libraries conducted by the Heinrich Heine University Dusseldorf in Germany. For more information, please call (312) 747-4050 or visit chipublic.org. To follow CPL on social media, visit us on Twitter ([@chipublic](https://twitter.com/chipublic)) or Facebook ([Chicago Public Library](https://www.facebook.com/ChicagoPublicLibrary)).