

# WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Waukegan Park District Officially Acquires Carnegie Library**

**Waukegan, Illinois (August 13, 2020)** – In partnership with the Waukegan Historical Society, the Waukegan Park District is excited to announce that it has officially acquired the historic Carnegie Library from the City of Waukegan. The Carnegie Library is located at 1 N. Sheridan Road in downtown Waukegan.

Designated as a Waukegan Historic Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Carnegie Library will become the new site for the Waukegan Historical Society's expanded history programming, archives, collections, exhibits, and research library. The building will also be used by the Waukegan Park District for programs, classes, events, and registrations.

For the 50th anniversary of the Waukegan Historical Society, the Waukegan Park District Board of Commissioners approved a resolution to fund the expansion of the Waukegan History Museum. The Waukegan Park District and Waukegan Historical Society plan to transform the Carnegie Library into a dynamic education and cultural center. The restoration of the Carnegie Library will begin with a design development process, after which bids will be accepted and the construction phase will begin. To date, more than 70% of the estimated funds needed have been raised from private sources. The restoration project is anticipated to be completed in three years.

Waukegan Park District President Jeremiah Johnson stated, "the Waukegan Park District is committed to working with the Waukegan Historical Society to restore the Carnegie Library and strengthen downtown Waukegan. The community will benefit greatly from this project with expanded history offerings and events. We can't wait to welcome the community into the renovated Carnegie Building!"

Waukegan Park District Executive Director Jay Lerner stated, "the Waukegan Park District is proud to take ownership of the Carnegie Library and partner with the Waukegan Historical Society to renovate the building. The renovation of such a historic building will allow us to expand our programs and share our local history with the community. Along with the Waukegan Historical Society, we will save an important part of Waukegan's history."

Waukegan Historical Society President Josh Bill stated, "we couldn't be more excited to partner with the Waukegan Park District to restore the Carnegie Building, one of Waukegan's most historical landmarks in the heart of the city. We have recognized a need for more space for more than ten years. The Carnegie Building will allow us to expand the Waukegan History Museum's programs and exhibits."

### **About the Waukegan Park District**

Established on December 26, 1916, the district has 50 properties and more than 737 acres of land, including the 18-hole Bonnie Brook and 9-hole Greenshire Golf Courses. Properties are managed to the highest environmental and conservation standards. Facilities operated by the district include the Field House Sports, Fitness and Aquatics Center, the Jack Benny Center for the Arts, the Waukegan's Greg Petry SportsPark, the Waukegan Skate Park, the Waukegan BMX Track, recreational centers, disc golf course, dog exercise area and agility course, outdoor sports fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, splash pads, and sports courts including basketball, tennis and pickleball. A full range of programs and services are offered year-round for all ages, from infants to seniors as well as special needs populations. Healthy lifestyles, wellness initiatives, and a connection with the outdoors and nature are integrated throughout programs, services, and special events. Cultural events are provided by the Waukegan Symphony Orchestra and Concert Chorus, and the Waukegan History Museum. There is something for everyone! The award-winning District employs 63 full-time and over 230 part-time, seasonal, and temporary employees. The District is a member of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), and Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA). The district maintains national accreditation from the NRPA Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) Distinguished Agency accreditation and Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) accreditation and maintains a Level A Loss Control Program. The District has received Government Finance Officer Association awards for Distinguished Budget Presentation and Certificate for Excellence in Financial Reporting for eight consecutive years. The district was awarded the NRPA National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 2013 and named a NRPA Gold Medal Finalist in 2012, 2013, and 2019.

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### **About the Waukegan Historical Society**

The Society is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit that was established in 1968. For the past 50 years the Society has promoted Waukegan's history through education programs, scholarship, exhibits, and events. The Society operates, in partnership with the Waukegan Park District, the Waukegan History Museum and the Raymond Research Library and Archives. School outreach is a priority of the Society. In the past five years, over 700 free programs on Waukegan's history have been presented in the schools to over 22,000 students. The Society supports student scholarship in history. Over 1,600 high school students from Waukegan and the surrounding communities have utilized the Society's Library and Archives for the Chicago Metro History Fair, with several projects advancing to the National History Day competition. For the past two years, the Society has received awards from the Illinois State Historical Society for its innovative exhibits.

### **About the Waukegan Carnegie Library**

The Waukegan Carnegie Library, designed by the Chicago architectural firm, Patton and Miller, opened on October 1, 1903. Andrew Carnegie donated \$25,000 to the City of Waukegan as part of his library philanthropy initiative. The Carnegie was used as a library until 1965. By then the Waukegan Public Library had been moved to a new location as operations had expanded beyond the capacity of the Carnegie. Since its closing, very little has occurred in the Carnegie with the exception of local preservationists taking action to save the building. In 2007, the Carnegie was

designated a Waukegan historic landmark. In 2013, it was nominated and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Carnegie's design is unique to most other "Carnegies" around the nation due to its prominent location on the peak of the bluff overlooking Lake Michigan. The building was designed to fit the contour of the bluff with multiple sub-floors below ground. Another distinct feature of the Carnegie is the corner entrance on Sheridan Road and Washington Street.

The Carnegie was the childhood library and inspiration of renowned author Ray Bradbury.

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