
WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

Waukegan Park District and Waukegan Historical Society Groundbreaking for the Future Waukegan History Museum at the Carnegie

Waukegan, Illinois (October 18, 2022) – The Waukegan Park District and the Waukegan Historical Society broke ground for the restoration and adaptive reuse of the former Carnegie Library to become the future Waukegan History Museum at the Carnegie. Located at 1 N. Sheridan Road, the Carnegie Library will be the site of the Waukegan History Museum with expanded history programming, archives, collections, exhibits, classrooms, and a research library.

Designated as a Waukegan Historic Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Carnegie Library opened in 1903 with a donation from Andrew Carnegie, a steel magnate and philanthropist who commissioned the construction of 2,509 libraries.

For the 50th anniversary of the Waukegan Historical Society, the Waukegan Park District’s Board of Commissioners approved a resolution supporting expansion of the Waukegan History Museum. The Waukegan Park District officially acquired the Carnegie Library from the City of Waukegan in 2020. Construction is anticipated to be done in late 2023 or early 2024.

Janet E. Kilkelly, President of the Waukegan Park District’s Board of Commissioners, stated, “The Waukegan Park District is committed to our long-term partnership with the Waukegan Historical Society and expansion of the Waukegan History Museum. The restoration of this historic building will allow us to expand our programming, while preserving an important piece of Waukegan’s history.”

Lori Nerheim, President of the Waukegan Historical Society’s Board of Directors, stated, “We are thrilled to celebrate this key milestone which is the result of many years of thoughtful planning, collaboration, and partnership. The Waukegan History Museum at the Carnegie will hold exciting new exhibits on Waukegan’s history and natural resources with interactive spaces that will help visitors draw connections between history and their contemporary lives. It will be a vibrant, welcoming, educational space where visitors feel comfortable learning, exploring, asking questions, and exchanging ideas.”

Jay Lerner, Executive Director of the Waukegan Park District, stated, “In partnership with the Waukegan Historical Society, the Waukegan Park District is excited about the transformation of the Carnegie Library into a dynamic museum to share local history. We look forward to welcoming the community into the Waukegan History Museum at the Carnegie.”

The Waukegan History Museum is operated by the Waukegan Park District and the Waukegan Historical Society and is the repository for Waukegan’s rich history.

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About the Waukegan Park District

Established on December 26, 1916, the Waukegan Park District (WPD) has 53 properties and more than 742 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 WPD include the Field House Sports, Fitness and Aquatics Center, Waukegan's Greg Petry SportsPark, Waukegan Skate Park, BMX Track, SplashZone, Percussion Playground, 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 need populations. Healthy lifestyles, wellness initiatives, and a connection with the outdoors and nature are integrated throughout programs, services, and special events. Arts and cultural activities are provided by the Jack Benny Center for the Arts, Waukegan Symphony Orchestra and Concert Chorus, and the Waukegan History Museum. We offer something for everyone!

A member of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA), and the Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA), the WPD employs 66 full-time and 290 part-time, seasonal, and temporary employees and is recognized by the IPRA as an Exceptional Workplace.

Nationally accredited by the NRPA Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) and State accredited through the IAPD Distinguished Agency Accreditation, the WPD has received the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Triple Crown Award for receiving the GFOA's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, Popular Annual Financial Reporting Award, and the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award. The WPD was awarded the NRPA National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 2013, and was named a Gold Medal Finalist in 2012, 2013, 2019, 2021 and 2022.

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About the Waukegan Historical Society

The Waukegan Historical Society is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit that was established in 1968. For the more than 50 years, the Society has connected people with Waukegan's past, present, and future through dynamic exhibits, programs, publications, resources, and tours. The Society operates, in partnership with the Waukegan Park District, the Haines House Museum in Bowen Park and the Raymond Research Library and Archives. School outreach is a priority of the Society. In the past five years, more than 700 free programs on Waukegan's history have been presented in the schools to over 22,000 students. More than 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 several years, the Society has received awards from the Illinois State Historical Society for its innovative exhibits.

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