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## **CO:LAB to Move into former Goodwin Library**

**(HARTFORD, CT, November 28, 2018)** Hartford Public Library (HPL) has announced that CO:LAB, a successful Hartford-based marketing and design firm, will be leasing space at HPL's former Goodwin Branch on New Britain Avenue and creating a new community center, Free Center, at the same time. CO:LAB's offices will only occupy about a third of the space at the former library, the rest will be devoted to meetings, programs, performances and other community uses.

"We are thrilled that CO:LAB will be moving into Goodwin," said HPL CEO Bridget Quinn-Carey. "We were hoping to find a dynamic, civic-minded partner that would utilize the space with the interests of the community in mind. The new center will retain the building's status as a vital community asset. Richard [Hollant] and his associates have built their success on innovation and forward thinking. I have no doubt that they possess the ability, desire and commitment to turn this beautiful building into a thriving showcase for the neighborhood's talents and aspirations."

Since the Goodwin Branch closed earlier this year, HPL has been working closely with neighborhood leaders and organizations to determine the best use for the site. The library has been in regular contact throughout the process with the Southwest/Behind the Rocks NRZ, which still holds its monthly meetings at the former Goodwin Branch. Quinn-Carey said, "In selecting a suitable tenant, we were very cognizant of the fact that the community in that area wanted an organization that would bring added value to the neighborhood, and one that would listen to and work with local residents, organizations and businesses."

"Living in Hartford my whole life, it was a bittersweet feeling knowing that some of our library branches were being closed," said Hartford City Council Majority Leader James Sanchez. "I am so very pleased and excited to see that the HPL and CO:LAB took the time to meet with the stakeholders and work with the local NRZ to come up with a solution that will reactive the space and make it a community resource that will revitalize the neighborhood and one we all can be proud of."

Rich Hollant, Principal of CO:LAB, said, "for the past decade, we've been looking for opportunities to be of increasingly greater service to our city. As a firm focused primarily on community engagement, we know communities' benefits from collective impact. Intentions matter. Action matters. And we've also learned—space matters. For this site to truly serve the community, we are looking to develop a range of partnership models—from building new nonprofit coalitions to public/private collaborations. As we've been engaging in discussions about activating this site, we are meeting with tremendous positive energy. We're quite confident this will be something great for the Southwest/Behind the Rocks Residents."

Hollant envisions a wide range of programs and activities at the new community center, some initiated by CO:LAB and others done through partnerships with various community organizations. Some of the opportunities he said his organization is exploring include a farmers/makers market, a cooperative youth garden, a pop-up café and a variety of training programs based on the needs of the community. “Based on working with and talking to people in the community, we’ve found that access to space is a serious barrier for activating so many great initiatives in this city,” Hollant said. “We are delighted to offer that space to organizations on the verge of creating tremendous impact.”

The former library will undergo some minor interior modifications to accommodate the center. Hollant said flexibility will be a key to the layout of the new center so that it can host a broad gamut of activities, from small classes and meetings to musical performances, and art exhibits. He added that his organization is also discussing the creation of a youth mentorship program at the site with Hartford Youth Scholars, COMPASS Youth Collaborative and RE-Center. Says Hollant, “We have been gathering tremendous insights from the NRZ and plan on an assessment of the community to understand what can be addressed through this site. It takes all of us to do right by community— so we’re taking an “All of Us” approach to the Goodwin Branch Site.”

“This is an innovative public-private partnership, developed hand-in-hand with the community. I want to thank CO:LAB, the Hartford Public Library, and the Southwest/Behind the Rocks NRZ and other stakeholders for putting together such a creative solution to keep the Goodwin branch building occupied, active, and open to the community,” said Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin.

“The Southwest and Behind the Rocks NRZ is excited that this innovative partnership with Co-Lab will maintain and enhance the Goodwin building as a community asset. This building will become a gathering space, a center for creativity, exploration and literacy for the community. We believe that this type of collaboration can be a model for Hartford neighborhoods,” said Southwest and Behind the Rocks NRZ Co-Chairs of the Kathy Evans and Karolina Kwiecinska

## **ABOUT HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Now celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> year, Hartford Public Library remains at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. With seven locations throughout the city, the library provides education, intellectual enrichment and cultural development for thousands of children, youth and adults every year. Hartford Public Library has also gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance and youth leadership training. Please visit [www.hplct.org](http://www.hplct.org).

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