



PRESS RELEASE

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Park Library Branch To Cease Operations At Current Site May 21 In Preparation For Move To New Facility

HARTFORD, May 10, 2021 – The Park Library branch will cease operations at its current location on Friday, May 21 after 46 years of service to the Frog Hollow neighborhood, paving the way for the opening of a gleaming new library just down the street.

The new building, currently under construction at the corner of Park and Broad streets, will be open to the public mid to late summer. The new library, now known as the Park Street Library @ the Lyric, will be approximately 13,000 square-feet and two-stories high. It will be the largest of Hartford Public Library's six community libraries.

"This library has a long and rich history in Hartford. It has served several generations of neighborhood residents. While this is the end of a chapter in our cozy current home, the new Park Street Library @ the Lyric will allow us to help the community in ways they could've only dreamed of in the late 1920s," said HPL President and CEO Bridget Quinn.

The Park Branch was established in May 1928 in a small rented store at 876 Park Street. In September 1939, it moved to 815 Broad Street. In August 1975, it was moved again to its present location at 744 Park Street, which is a rented facility. The lease on the location ends on May 31. Until the new location opens, Frog Hollow residents are encouraged to use the services at the Downtown or Dwight libraries.

"Since 1975, the Park Street branch has served the community of Frog Hollow out of a 2,000 sq. ft. leased space. We are excited to soon start a new chapter with the Park St. Library @ the Lyric and provide a library space this community has waited so long for," said Marie Jarry, director of public services.

Graciela Rivera, Park Library manager, is working alongside her team to pack up the small library, removing outdated books from the collection. Not much of the furniture will be packed up because the new location is outfitted with brand new furnishings. The materials will be transported to the Downtown Library and stored in the library's subbasement in the short term. Rivera is working to help develop a larger collection to fill the new Park Library.

“As a kid who grew up in the Frog Hollow neighborhood, I spent a lot of hours at the Park Library, doing homework, reading, and hanging out. Because of this experience, I want to give back by helping to create a new space that is welcoming and warm, where people can feel comfortable learning and exploring,” Rivera said. “We want to partner with the community – the businesses and the people – so they always know that the Park Street Library is theirs.”

The Park Street Library has been known for having the largest collection of Spanish language materials in the system. In an effort to serve the diverse Frog Hollow neighborhood, HPL's librarians are working to curate a special selection of books, creating an almost entirely new collection. The library will also preserve books that are relevant to the history of the neighborhood. The new Park St. Library @ the Lyric will feature a brand new opening day collection of approximately 1,500 books and 150 Dvds for all ages too.

“Frog Hollow has families from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Puerto Rico, just to name a few. We plan to create a collection that reflects that diversity,” Quinn said.

For decades activists and neighborhood groups have advocated for an expanded library in the neighborhood. The first floor will have a 3,000 square foot reading room, a separate 1,200 square foot children’s room, a small café, and an enclosed outdoor patio area for performances and events. The second floor will feature a learning lab, conference room, and a nearly 2,000 square foot community room able to accommodate up to 100 people for meetings, lectures, performances, and other events.

Exposed wood will give the interior of the new library a warm, welcoming feel. And in a tip-of-the-hat to the history of the site, large photographs of the hand-painted murals adorning the front of the Lyric Theater will hang inside.

It’s a fitting touch for a branch library whose history is intertwined with that of the neighborhood. In the 91 years since the community library opened, Frog Hollow has evolved from an enclave of immigrant factory workers to the epicenter of Hartford’s vibrant Spanish-speaking community.

For more information about the new Park Library, visit parklibrary.hplct.org.

About Hartford Public Library

Now celebrating its 127th year, Hartford Public Library remains at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience in the 21st 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. www.hplct.org.