



March 5, 2018

Mr. Brian Bannon
Commissioner & Chief Executive Officer
Chicago Public Library
400 S. State Street
Chicago, IL 60605

Re: West Loop Branch Library

Dear Commissioner Bannon:

I'm writing to express our concerns and objections to the proposed plan by the Chicago Public Library (CPL) to utilize space at the West Loop branch for regional offices. We learned of these plans recently from press coverage.

The building located at 118 N. Aberdeen was donated by Sterling Bay to be used as a public neighborhood library to serve the West Loop community. Alderman Burnett and community members advocated for a donation from Sterling Bay as a community benefit. Alderman Burnett and the City of Chicago have also allocated \$2.12 million in "Local Impact" Neighborhood Bonus Funds to be applied toward the build-out of the West Loop library. Sterling Bay will deliver the building to CPL fully renovated to CPL's specifications. We strongly believe that this donation and funds should be used as originally intended which is to directly serve the community.

CPL operates two large regional libraries: Sulzer (North) and Woodson (South). Both of these regional libraries are approximately 65,000 sq. ft. which is over 4 times the size of the West Loop library building. These regional libraries are sized appropriately to house regional offices.

Based on the CPL press release of Jan 28, 2018, CPL intends to use approximately 1/3 of the building (the entire second floor) as regional offices. To take space from a neighborhood library to house regional offices is not the best use of a neighborhood branch generally. This is especially true for a building that is being donated for the express purpose of creating a community benefit. West Loop residents have waited decades for a public library. In that time, our residential community has grown significantly and is still projected to increase substantially but public services and facilities have not kept up.



For reference, here is a comparison of neighborhood libraries by square feet:

- Chinatown (old branch: 11.75k sq. ft. | new Chinatown Library 16.5k sq. ft.)
- Mabel Manning: 13k sq. ft.
- Roosevelt branch on Taylor: 8k sq. ft. (new Roosevelt branch will be 17k sq. ft.)
- Bucktown-Wicker Park: 15.5k sq. ft.
- Near North: 13.6k sq. ft.
- West Town: 13.3k sq. ft.

By taking 5,000 sq. ft. for administrative offices, our West Loop public library would only be 11.6k sq. ft. This would make the West Loop branch much smaller than Chinatown, Bucktown-Wicker Park, and the future Roosevelt branch, which are located in neighborhoods with much less density.

Without the regional offices, the West Loop library would have 16.4k sq. ft of usable space to serve the community which is more consistent in size to other neighborhood libraries. We believe strongly the proposed plan to include regional offices is an inappropriate use of space in a building that was donated to benefit the community. The space should be used as the gift was originally intended, to serve the community. Similarly, Local Impact funds should be used to benefit the “local” community.

To date, there has been no community process to solicit input into the design and use of the West Loop library building.

Therefore, we request that CPL undertake a community input process for the planning of the West Loop Library. We would be glad to help facilitate/support community meetings or surveys to gather feedback. We look forward to working with you and CPL in making the West Loop Library a great community asset and anchor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "May Toy".

May Toy

Vice President, Neighbors of West Loop | may@neighborsofwestloop.com

- cc: Board - Neighbors of West Loop
Alderman Walter Burnett, Jr. - 27th Ward
Hon. Rahm Emanuel, Mayor - City of Chicago
Ms. Linda Johnson Rice, President, CPL Board of Directors
Mr. David Reifman, Commissioner, DPD - City of Chicago
Mr. Patrick Murphey, Assistant Commissioner, DPD- City of Chicago