



Contact:
Suzanne M. Thinnis
Communications Manager
412.578.2458 (office)
412.491.6889 (cell)

Dick Skrinjar
Director of Communication, Mayor's
Office
412-255-2484
dick.skrinjar@city.pittsburgh.pa.us

Repairs to Begin on Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh – Allegheny Regional

(PITTSBURGH, PA – August 30, 2006) The City of Pittsburgh has approved a plan that will repair the damage to the building housing Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh – Allegheny Regional. The building, located at 5 Allegheny Square, has been closed since April 7, 2006 after a lightning strike caused part of the facility's clock tower to explode sending large debris into the building's roof and clock tower structure.

As owner of the building, the city is working with Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) to ensure that all essential repairs to the roof and HVAC system are made. As one of three tenants in the building, CLP was required to insure the building, and it is the Library's insurance that will cover the multimillion dollar repair cost. Work is slated to begin sometime this fall. The building's additional two tenants, the Hazlett Theatre and a senior center operated by the City of Pittsburgh, will not be affected by the repairs and will continue regular operations.

The city and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh have also agreed that the building does not currently meet the needs of a modern neighborhood library and that this is a good opportunity for the Library to seek alternate space in the same neighborhood.

Originally constructed in 1890, the four story building is an historic landmark. The City of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh recognize the value of the historic nature of the building and want to see a reuse for the facility. The city is currently working with Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation to find a tenant that will fully utilize the building's historic capacity

"We understand the decision and are cooperating with the City of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh in trying to assess how the building might attract good new uses," said Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr., President, Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation. "Landmarks is underwriting preliminary architecture and engineering studies to assist in finding appropriate solutions. Landmarks also provided the leading studies for other Allegheny Center buildings, the Old Post Office and Buhl Planetarium, which are now successfully reused."

Statement from Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) is anxious to restore library service to the customers of CLP-Allegheny Regional. After a severe lightning strike on April 7 caused Library officials to close the building due to safety concerns, CLP enlisted the assistance of the community to help identify interim sites. While Library officials have looked at many possible interim locations on the North Side, the Library is concerned about the significant cost and time that would be required to retrofit a space that still would not be ideal for offering the best library service.

CLP has come to the conclusion that a new facility is needed in order to restore full library service. For that reason, the Library has elevated CLP - Allegheny Regional to be one of the next priorities in its

Capital Improvements Program. Currently CLP is in the midst of a system-wide renewal to make its neighborhood library locations throughout the City of Pittsburgh accessible and contemporary. To date, six neighborhood locations have been either renovated or relocated, and the first floor of the Main Library in Oakland has been renovated. The visibility of the renewed library buildings has brought new vitality to the libraries and their communities, with all locations benefiting from increased visitor and circulation numbers.

The Library remains committed to library services on the North Side and is working closely with a variety of sources, including local community organizations and the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) to help identify a site for a new permanent facility. Library officials have looked at several locations and expedited the reopening of CLP – Woods Run in order to restore services.

A 16,500 square foot lot at 1210 Federal Street has been identified by the URA as one available space for a new freestanding library. Located on a corner not far from the current CLP-Allegheny Regional building, the lot is situated in an area poised for potential development. CLP will need to do further research to ensure the space is acceptable, but is prepared to submit a proposal to the URA to begin the process. The idea of a new freestanding library has earned the support of many community groups who are eager for businesses and neighborhoods to have the opportunity to gain the full effect of the Library's economic impact that has been demonstrated in other Pittsburgh neighborhoods.

“Libraries are key amenities in neighborhoods,” said Mark T. Fatla, Executive Director, North Side Leadership Conference. “We not only wanted to keep the library an active part of the North Side, but we expressed a need to grow the library and its services. I am pleased the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh system shares the same belief. To the Library's credit, the administration came to us at the very beginning, met with the community leadership and has been very upfront in meeting the concerns of the existing building and the needs of the new structure.”

Originally constructed in 1890 as a main library to Allegheny City, Allegheny Regional has become landlocked over time and technologically outdated. The interior of Allegheny Regional was extensively renovated by the City of Pittsburgh in the early 1970s. As one of three tenants in the building, the Library was using approximately 12,000 square feet for public service. Currently, Hazlett Theatre and a senior center operated by the City of Pittsburgh also share a portion of the building. Library officials recognize the value of the historic nature of the building and realize that it is better suited for another purpose. The library applauds the city for its efforts with Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation to find a proper reuse for the building.

###

About Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

“Free to the People” since 1895

Established as a public trust in 1895, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh serves the citizens of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County with a distinguished history of leadership among the country's great public libraries. Through its Main Library, 17 neighborhood locations and the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is the region's most visited asset, welcoming over 2.2 million customers last year. Each year the Library provides more than 6,000 free programs, classes and other learning and training opportunities that are tailored to meet the dynamic and diverse needs of people living in Western Pennsylvania.