



Reopening Celebration for the Crane Branch Library

Friday, September 22, 2023

Welcome and introductions

Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Director John Spears

New York State Senator Sean Ryan

New York State Assemblymember Jonathan Rivera

City of Buffalo Deputy Mayor Dr. Callie Johnson

City of Buffalo Councilmember Joel Feroletto

Erie County Legislative Chairwoman April McCants - Baskin

Closing and questions

John Spears

Music from members of the Community Music School



MEDIA RELEASE

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Grand Reopening Ceremony At Buffalo's Crane Branch Library

Community Welcomed Back & Funders Acknowledged

(Buffalo, NY, Friday, September 22, 2023) - The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library welcomed the community back to the Crane Branch Library at 633 Elmwood Avenue today for its Grand Reopening Celebration. The Library had been closed for the past year while undergoing a major \$2.2 million interior and exterior construction improvement project with new mechanics, comfortable furnishing and modern design treatments to better address accessibility and community needs.

"We are so glad to welcome everyone back!" said Library Director John Spears.

"For nearly 80 years when the first book borrowing center opened down the block on Elmwood, libraries have played a key role in providing services to this thriving community. The Crane Branch has always been a busy library providing educational, cultural, and community resources to this eclectic neighborhood."

"Everything about the Crane Library is new and exciting, from the layout, to the new elevator, windows, meeting spaces, computer stations, and custom public art sculpture mounted to the front of the building. None of this work would have been possible without the longstanding support of New York State Senator Sean Ryan, Assemblymember Jonathan D. Rivera, the state legislature, and the City of Buffalo," added Spears.

"The renovation of the Crane Branch Library has refreshed one of the oldest and most beloved libraries in Erie County, making it fully accessible and more inviting to ensure it will be able to serve every member of the community for many more years to come. The transformation of this long-time cornerstone of the Elmwood Village is an illustration of the positive impact library construction funding can have on our communities and a testament to the importance of continuing to allocate state funds to projects like this one," said Senator Sean Ryan.

Assemblyman Jonathan Rivera, Erie County Legislative Chairwoman April McCants – Baskin, Deputy Mayor Dr. Callie Johnson, Buffalo Common Council Member Joel Feroletto, Deputy Erie County Executive Lisa Chimera, and artist Ellen Steinfeld were among the attendees.

The construction improvements, the second phase of a three phase project, include:

- New flooring, ceiling, and wall finishes throughout the first and second floors.
- New circulation/information desk.
- Two new flexible meeting/study spaces on the main floor.
- One large meeting space and a smaller room on the second floor to better meet community needs.
- New furnishings including comfy chairs and sitting areas, enhanced lighting, easy to read signage, modern tables, and computer stations.
- New efficient windows replaced original aluminum framed, non-insulated windows.
- The 9 foot Crane bird sculpture on the front of the building was created by local artist Ellen Steinfeld. It is called *Knowledge* and was selected and commissioned by the Buffalo Arts Commission.
- Installation of a single-story, 100 square foot vestibule was built at the existing service/loading entrance at the rear of the building. This allows for proper egress by extending that path as well as providing a secondary ADA exit from the building.
- Mechanical system improvements and replacements based on the Library's reconfiguration of the lobby, new elevator, and interior space.
- Removal and replacement of old rooftop units which are now set back further from the roof edge to diminish visibility from the street.

Director Spears also introduced the sculptor's artist Ellen Steinfeld and acknowledged the dedication of library staff from the Buildings and Grounds, IT, Public Service, Graphics, and Administration departments. Music was provided by members of the Community Music School.

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Fun facts about the James L. Crane Branch Library:

- The Library was named after James Lowrie Crane (July 28, 1877–September 2, 1942) a (Buffalo) District Councilman, lawyer, businessman, and spokesperson for the Elmwood Business Association.
- In 1928, the Elmwood Business Association, two years after its incorporation, went on record as to the need for a library in this community.
- In 1944, the Buffalo Public Library opened the *Elmwood Circulating Center*, located at 506 Elmwood. It was an experimental unit to sample the reading needs of the community. It provided service to adults only. In its first nine months, over 14,400 books circulated.
- In 1953, the City of Buffalo appropriated \$200,000 for construction of a new library. The firm of *Backus, Crane and Love* was appointed by the City as the architects. David B. Crane, son of James L. Crane, whom the Library was named after, was in charge of designing the building. He died before the building opened.
- On Friday, June 17, 1955, the James L. Crane Branch officially opened right here at 633 Elmwood Avenue at Highland. More than 300 people attended the gathering including members of Crane family.
- When the Library opened in 1955, its shelf capacity was for 18,000 volumes.

2023

- Cost of the work completed in this second phase – approximately \$2,216,000. The total cost of the project Phases 1 & 2 – approximately \$3,800,000. Phase one included installation of the elevator.
- Funders for Phase 2 included the City of Buffalo, NYS Library Construction Aid, and the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library.
- The Crane bird sculpture, mounted to the front of the building. was designed by esteemed local artist, sculptor, and painter Ellen Steinfeld. The piece was selected from several submissions by the Buffalo Arts Commission. It is called *Knowledge* and designed with the word knowledge spelled out at the top of the piece. The stainless steel sculpture is approximately 9' X 6' X 6" in size and weighs 800 pounds. The fabrication process, including several model designs, water jet steel cuts, polishing and working with structural engineers took three months. Installation took two days.
- Nearly 28,000 books and other materials can circulate from this library (number does not include digital content).
- Crane Branch Library manager is Taylor Harding and the current hours are
Monday 11:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., Tuesday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Thursday 11:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Friday 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., closed on Sundays.
- In 2019, pre-Covid and pre-construction, the library had over 71,000 visitors.
- The second story interior space covers approximately 60% of the footprint of the first floor, with a flat roof over the first floor.
- The project architect was Raf Godlewski from the Buffalo firm Architectural Resources (aka A/r).
- Next steps Phase 3, no start date – The project will create an accessible rooftop public space, accented with planters, usable for public meetings and gatherings both in conjunction with or independent of the interior public meeting space. Anticipated start date: to be determined. Cost: Roughly \$232,000. #