



Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall

For Immediate Release

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Library Park Receives Three Grants

Library Park received three grants in June: \$150,000 from the Allegheny Foundation; \$50,000 from the Heinz Endowments; and \$50,000 from the Hillman Foundation.

“The log jam that halted Library Park has finally loosened!” enthused Maggie Forbes, Executive Director of the Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall. “We are so excited about getting back to work again.”

The ACFL&MH still needs an additional \$150,000 to complete Library Park. “These grants restore momentum and get us so much closer to finishing,” says Forbes

Trees and shrubs – including flowering redbuds, ruby red horse chestnuts and saucer magnolia – will be planted in October, weaving around the barrier fence that was installed last December. These trees will not only add beauty to Library Park and the view from Main Street, but they will further stabilize the hillside.

Work on the Library Park’s grand entrance and signature serpentine walkway cannot begin until full funding is committed. Even if that were to happen immediately, backed-up construction schedules preclude the work being done this season.

Forbes expects the ACFL&MH will secure the balance of funding needed over the next few months. Work to complete Library Park will be scheduled in the winter, then begin when the weather breaks, probably in late March 2020. If all goes according to plan, Library Park’s grand opening will be celebrated early next summer. Silver lining: the trees and shrubs planted this fall will have settled in, enhancing that celebration. In the original timetable, planting would have waited for the dormant season following the grand opening.

Library Park will convert the Library & Music Hall’s grounds from a steep barrier to a lovely park, connecting the ACFL&MH with Carnegie’s central business district below. Landscape Architect La Quatra Bonci’s design generated more enthusiasm from the community at large than any part of the Library & Music Hall’s 15-year journey from run down to remarkable. Fortunately, funders shared public enthusiasm with generous support for the project.

Library Park’s first phase, from the grounds back to the Library & Music Hall’s historic facility, was completed in fall 2017. It completely exceeded expectations! The strategic removal of compromised and compromising trees, new sidewalks and a driveway, greatly improved parking, gracious exterior

lighting, a stately flagpole in front of the Library, a “piazza” across from the Music Hall entrance and landscaping around the building created a wonderful new sense of place that the Carnegie Carnegie that it had not enjoyed in its then 116-year history. Work on the Park itself was scheduled to begin in late spring 2018, with a grand celebratory opening planned for early fall of that year.

Unfortunately, a February 2018 mudslide derailed those plans, dropping 12 truckloads of “spoil” (mud and rubble) onto Williams Way below.

No one was hurt, no property was damaged, and Carnegie’s Department Public Works did a great job cleaning up the debris quickly. However, the incident was grave enough that the Borough and the ACFL&MH agreed to commission a geotechnical survey. There were actually two surveys, plus several meetings with engineers, architects, contractors and other ACFL&MH and Borough representatives.

The studies revealed a potentially hazardous outcrop of rock, topped by the trees along the edge of the ACFL&MH’s bluff. “Potentially hazardous” was not a description the Library & Music Hall could ignore. Engineers finally found a solution that would stabilize the hillside, while safeguarding the integrity of Library Park. The rock, and the trees along with them, were removed. The edge of the ACFL&MH’s bluff was regraded and seeded.

Remediation was challenging and costly, adding \$185,000 to Library Park. Contractors successfully completed slope stabilization in December 2018. But along the way, Library Park’s forward momentum came to a standstill.

The delays were frustrating, but the ACFL&MH never lost faith in Library Park. During the months of uncertainty last spring, work on the marvelous mosaic mural designed by artist Laura Jean McLaughlin proceeded as planned. More than 220 people fabricated the mosaic during 14 workshops. It was completed and installed last September. By pure serendipity this beautiful, 117-ft work of public art was created in the Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall’s 117th year of service. It will be enjoyed by generations of visitor to Library Park. However, people aren’t waiting for the serpentine walkway. They are already finding their ways to the sparkling mosaic benches – to meet up, picnic or canoodle!

When he visited the Library & Music Hall in March, Governor Wolf shone a spotlight on Library Park, talking about how compelling the project is. Not a week goes by without two or three people asking Forbes “When will we finish Library Park?” She looks forward to pinpointing the date.

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