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/ Mayor emanuel announces innovative partnership between chicago housing authority

MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY AND CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY THAT WILL DELIVER CO-LOCATED HOUSING AND NEW LIBRARIES

Oct 21, 2016

Mayor Rahm Emanuel joined Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) CEO Eugene Jones, Jr. and Chicago Public Library (CPL) Commissioner Brian Bannon today to announce an interagency partnership that will provide three new mixed-income housing developments with co-located libraries - strengthening communities with affordable housing and community anchors that support life-long learning. In a break from the standard, cookie-cutter designs that are common to government buildings, Mayor Emanuel envisions striking and bold architectural designs for these buildings. As part of the projects, he will call on architectural firms to bid on the work and use their creativity to leave a lasting legacy of public art in neighborhoods across Chicago.



“Chicago will be one of the first cities using this type of partnership between housing and libraries to benefit and beautify our neighborhoods,” said Mayor Emanuel. “This model will create spaces everyone can enjoy, and I hope will be the next great civic projects here in Chicago.”

The announcement was made at the Northtown Branch Library in West Ridge, that will be replaced with a new branch library to be located on the ground floor of a senior apartment building near Pratt and Western avenues. Two other mixed-income housing developments with co-located libraries are also planned for the Near West Side and Irving Park communities. As part of the ongoing redevelopment of the Roosevelt Square community, a new Roosevelt Branch Library is planned near Taylor and Aberdeen streets. A new Independence Branch Library is also planned near Elston Avenue and Pulaski Road.

“By creating a new library and affordable senior housing we are able to meet vital West Ridge community needs,” Alderman Debra Silverstein (50th) said. “I am grateful for the leadership and cooperation of Mayor Emanuel, the CHA and the Chicago Public Library.”

“Brining mixed-income housing and a library together will be a great addition to the 25th ward,” said Alderman Danny Solis (25th). “I look forward to the benefits of this community asset for our residents.”

“I am pleased that these projects will allow CHA to deliver new housing units on the North Side and expand affordable housing opportunities to more communities,” said CHA CEO Eugene Jones, Jr. “We know that housing is vital to our neighborhoods but strong, healthy communities also require community anchors like libraries and CHA is proud to be a partner with CPL as we move forward with this innovative plan.”

For each site, a two-stage design competition will be held to attract top-quality architects who will fully engage the community to produce an architecturally significant and community-inclusive building. Initially a Request for Qualifications will be sent to design firms. From that group, up to three pre-qualified architectural firms will be chosen to develop a conceptual design, budget and schedule. Each firm will receive a stipend for this work. An evaluation committee will review the submissions and select the winning firm.

Once the architects are selected for each project, CHA, CPL and the City of Chicago’s Department of Planning and Development will host a design workshop with the community in which the libraries are located. The two-stage process is expected to get underway by the end of this year and take approximately 10 weeks to complete.

“Libraries play a vital role in making knowledge and learning accessible, as well as offer a common space where the community comes together,” said CPL Commissioner Brian Bannon. “Partnering with CHA is an innovative approach that better positions both of us to build a stronger foundation for our communities.”

Jones noted that with this partnership, CHA becomes one of the first public housing agencies in the country to develop co-located housing with other municipal facilities. “By combining key community assets like libraries with housing, we will ensure that affordable housing and services and programs are available to neighborhoods across the city,” Jones said.

The new library facilities will offer programs and spaces for both CHA and area children and families. Each branch will include a built-out early childhood active learning space. School-aged children will have access to the Library's Teacher in the Library program which offers free small one on one homework assistance. Teens will have access to technology, resources, and classes that inspire exploration, creativity and learning through the YOUmedia program.

In recent years, CPL has increased technology and workforce programs for adults. These new branches will offer computer classes and one-on one coaching to build digital literacy and technology skills for adults and seniors. Staff will be trained to connect job-seekers to best-in-class career services provided by workforce development organizations and educational institutions. The Library will also continue to partner with expert workforce organizations to deliver trainings on additional skills, such as resume writing, interview prep and industry-specific skills. Traditional library programs, such as book clubs for seniors and intergenerational educational and cultural programming will also be available to these communities.

About CHA:

Under the leadership of Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) helps build vibrant communities across the city. By using housing as a platform, the agency works with a host of key stakeholders to sustain strong neighborhoods to best prepare CHA residents for the global economy on their road toward self-sufficiency. CHA also provides stable, decent, safe and affordable housing to more than 62,000 low-income families and individuals, while supporting healthy communities in neighborhoods throughout Chicago.

About Chicago Public Library:

Since 1873, Chicago Public Library (CPL) has encouraged lifelong learning by welcoming all people and offering equal access to information, entertainment and knowledge through innovative services and programs, as well as cutting-edge technology. Each year, Chicago Public Library offers 100,000 computer help sessions, free online and in-person homework help citywide, supports 2.9 million computer sessions and draws almost 10 million visitors per year. CPL now offers many Chicago neighborhoods multimedia collaboration spaces designed for teens, Maker Labs that allow patrons to do 3D design and printing, and a website that allows patrons online access to a plethora of library materials, including eBooks, audiobooks and periodicals. CPL has seen double digit increases in reach and demand for these high-quality services. Demand for these services continues to grow in Chicago neighborhoods and investment in current and new library buildings is necessary meet these demands.

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CPL, CHA Announce Winning Design Firms for Innovative Co-Located Housing/Library Developments

March 19, 2017



Architecture Firms with Strong Ties to Chicago Will Bring World-Class Design to Community Anchors for Neighborhoods

Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) CEO Eugene Jones, Jr., Chicago Public Library (CPL) Commissioner Brian Bannon and Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) Commissioner David Reifman today announced the selection of the architecture firms that will work with communities to design co-located housing and library developments in three communities in the city. The selection of the firms follows a design competition to identify the most innovative ideas that will ensure that each community will have a design that best reflects its needs.

“We are fortunate to have award-winning and internationally recognized firms designing the next great civic projects here in Chicago,” Mayor Rahm Emanuel said. “We are one of the first cities using this type of model between housing and libraries to benefit and beautify our neighborhoods.”

The three architecture firms selected are:

- **John Ronan Architects for the Independence Branch** at 4022 N. Elston in the Irving Park community. The firm designed the Gary Comer Youth Center in the Greater Grand Crossing community, South Shore International College Preparatory High School in the South Shore community and the Poetry Foundation in the River North Community.
- **Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) for the Roosevelt Branch** near Taylor and Ada streets on the Near West Side. This project is part of the CHA’s ongoing redevelopment of the Roosevelt Square

community. SOM designed the award-winning Chinatown Branch Library and two of Chicago's most notable buildings: The Richard J. Daley Center and John Hancock Center.

- **Perkins+Will for the Northtown Branch** at Western and Pratt avenues in the West Ridge community. The firm designed both the original and new Jones College Preparatory High School in the South Loop community, the Rush University Medical Center and Campus Transformation project on the West Side and more than a dozen libraries, some with mixed-uses, in the United States and Canada.

All three finalists have deep Chicago roots, experience building community-based projects and have led effective community engagement processes for projects such as Chinatown Branch Library, Jones College Preparatory High School and Gary Comer Youth Center that are integral parts of Chicago neighborhoods.

"Libraries make knowledge and learning accessible, and offer a common space for community members of all ages," said Bannon. "These three firms will bring world-class design to new housing and community anchors so that neighborhood residents can enjoy the best of what design has to offer."

The architects will work with each project developer and will soon begin the community engagement process with community stakeholders to come up with a final design for each of the buildings that meets the needs of each community. CHA, CPL and DPD will host design workshops within each community where the co-located housing and libraries are planned. Construction is targeted to begin by the end of this year with estimated completion in winter 2018.

"This is another one of the innovative ways that CHA is bringing affordable housing opportunities to all Chicago neighborhoods. We are looking forward to the community engagement process that will help guide the final designs and know they will reflect the unique needs and desires of each community" Jones said.

The winning firms were selected last week following a design competition that included 32 firms submitting initial proposals in response to a Request for Qualifications in late 2016. From there, nine semi-finalists were selected – three for each project – to conceive designs that were judged by an evaluation committee on a variety of criteria, including:

- The quality and context of the architecture relative to each site
- The sustainability of the building systems and materials
- Their respective layout, landscaping and design innovations.

The new library facilities will offer programs and spaces for area children and families as well as CHA. Each branch will include a built-out early childhood active learning space. School-aged children will have access to the Library's Teacher in the Library program which offers free small one-on-one homework assistance. Teens will have access to technology, resources, and classes that inspire exploration, creativity and learning through the YOUmedia program.

In recent years, CPL has increased technology and workforce programs for adults. These new branches will offer computer classes and one-on-one coaching to build digital literacy and technology skills for adults and seniors. Staff will be trained to connect job-seekers to best-in-class career services provided by workforce development organizations and educational institutions. The Library will also continue to partner with expert workforce organizations to deliver trainings on additional skills, such as resume writing, interview prep and industry-specific skills. Traditional library programs, such as book clubs for seniors and intergenerational educational and cultural programming will also be available to these communities.

About CHA:

The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) helps build vibrant communities across the city. By using housing as a platform, the agency works with a host of key stakeholders to sustain strong neighborhoods to best prepare CHA residents for the global economy on their road toward self-sufficiency. CHA also provides stable, decent, safe and affordable housing to more than 62,000 low-income families and individuals, while supporting healthy communities in neighborhoods throughout Chicago. For more information visit www.thecha.org.

About the Architects:

Perkins+Will: Founded in 1935 in Chicago, Illinois, Perkins+Will now has 21 offices across the United States and Canada. With hundreds of award-winning projects annually, they serve clients in the civil and cultural, corporate and commercial, healthcare, education, science and technology, sports and recreation, and transportation markets.

John Ronan Architects: Founded in 1999, John Ronan Architects is an internationally-recognized design firm based in Chicago and comprised of dedicated design professionals committed to producing architecture of the highest quality, marked by conceptual innovation, exploration of materiality, and a rigorous attention to detail.

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP (SOM) is one of the largest and most influential architecture, interior design, engineering, and urban planning firms in the world. Founded in 1936, we have completed more than 10,000 projects in over 50 countries. They are renowned for our iconic buildings and their commitment to design excellence, innovation, and sustainability.

About Chicago Public Library:

Since 1873, Chicago Public Library (CPL) has encouraged lifelong learning by welcoming all people and offering equal access to information, entertainment and knowledge through innovative services and programs, as well as cutting-edge technology. Through its 80 locations, the Library provides free access to a rich collection of materials, both physical and digital, and presents the highest quality author discussions, exhibits and programs for children, teens and adults. CPL received the Social Innovator Award from Chicago Innovation Awards; won a National Medal for Library Services from the Institute for Museum and Library Services; was named the first-ever winner of the National Summer Learning

Association's Founder's Award in recognition of its Summer Learning Challenge; and was ranked number one in the U.S., and third in the world, by an international study of major urban libraries conducted by the Heinrich Heine University Dusseldorf in Germany. For more information visit www.chipublib.org.



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AFFORDABLE HOUSING FINANCE

Chicago to Co-Locate Mixed-Income Housing, Libraries in 3 Developments

Innovative model is part of interagency partnership between Chicago Housing Authority and Chicago Public Library.

By [Christine Serlin](#)

An interagency partnership between the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the Chicago Public Library (CPL) will bring mixed-income housing developments co-located with library branches to three communities in Chicago. This model is expected to benefit and strengthen each of the communities and provide a space that everyone can enjoy.



Courtesy Perkins+Will

Northtown Apartments and the library branch in the West Ridge community of Chicago will be designed by Perkins+Will and developed by Evergreen Real Estate Group.

Northtown Apartments in West Ridge and Independence Apartments in Irving Park, which are being created in partnership with Evergreen Real Estate Group, will each deliver 30 public housing and 14 affordable units as well as library facilities that will offer programs and spaces for area children and families.

The third project is part of the ongoing redevelopment of Roosevelt Square by Related Midwest. It is slated to include 73 mixed-income units with library facilities.



Courtesy John Ronan Architects

The Independence Apartments and library branch in Chicago's Irving Park Community will be designed by John Ronan Architects and developed by Evergreen Real Estate Group.

"The Chicago Housing Authority is focused on providing housing and other opportunities that enhance the lives of our residents while helping to build strong, vibrant neighborhoods," says CHA CEO Eugene Jones Jr. "Under the leadership of mayor Rahm Emanuel, this innovative partnership with Chicago Public Library will provide residents of all ages with quality housing options and a community anchor of world-class design that will serve them for years to come."

The three developments are going through the city approval process, with final approval expected in September. Construction is slated to start at the end of 2017 and be completed by the end of 2018.

Each project will have a different funding package with several components that may include CHA funds, tax-exempt bonds, city of Chicago tax-increment financing, 4% and 9% low-income housing tax credits, and donation tax credits.



© SOM

Apartment and the Roosevelt branch library will be part of Related Midwest's Roosevelt Square redevelopment efforts. The development is designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM).

The city's Department of Planning and Development (DPD), CHA, and CPL co-hosted a design contest to find the most innovative ideas for the co-located housing and libraries. All three of the winning architects, announced in March, have deep Chicago roots. John Ronan Architects will design the Independence Apartments and its library branch, Perkins+Will will design the Northtown Apartments and its library branch, and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) will design the Roosevelt housing and library branch project.

The architects will work with the project developers to begin the community engagement process to come up with the final designs to meet each community's needs. CHA, CPL, and DPD also will host design workshops within

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"These libraries will incorporate traditional library services as well as early learning play spaces, YOUmedia digital media labs for teens, and the award-winning programs and services that allow our branch libraries to serve as community anchors."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Christine Serlin

Christine Serlin is an editor for Affordable Housing Finance, Multifamily Executive, and Builder. She has covered the affordable housing industry since 2001. Before that, she worked at several daily newspapers, including the Contra Costa Times and the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. Connect with Christine at cserlin@hanleywood.com or follow her on Twitter @ChristineSerlin.

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Public-Private Partnership Provides Co-Located Housing, Library Branch



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

Chicago Finds a Way to Improve Public Housing: Libraries

Other cities have combined books and subsidized housing, but the outgoing mayor, Rahm Emanuel, has embraced the concept with three striking new projects.



By **Michael Kimmelman**

May 15, 2019

CHICAGO — Cabrini-Green, the Robert Taylor Homes: demolished years ago, Chicago's most notorious projects continue to haunt the city, conjuring up the troubled legacy of postwar public housing in America.

By the 1970s, Washington wanted out of the public housing business, politicians blaming the system's ills on poor residents and tower-in-the-park-style architecture, channeling tax breaks toward white flight and suburban sprawl. Now the nation's richest cities invent all sorts of new ways not to solve the affordable housing crisis.

Is any city doing public housing right these days?

I recently visited three sites that the Chicago Housing Authority has just or nearly completed. These small, community-enhancing, public-private ventures, built swiftly and well, are the opposite of Cabrini-Green and Robert Taylor. With a few dozen apartments each, they're costlier per unit than the typical public housing developments, and they're not going to make a big dent in a city with a dwindling population but a growing gap between the number of affordable apartments and the demand for them.

That said, they're instructive. As Cabrini-Green and other isolated, troubled old mega-sites proved, bigger isn't necessarily better. These are integrated works of bespoke architecture, their exceptional design central to their social and civic agenda.

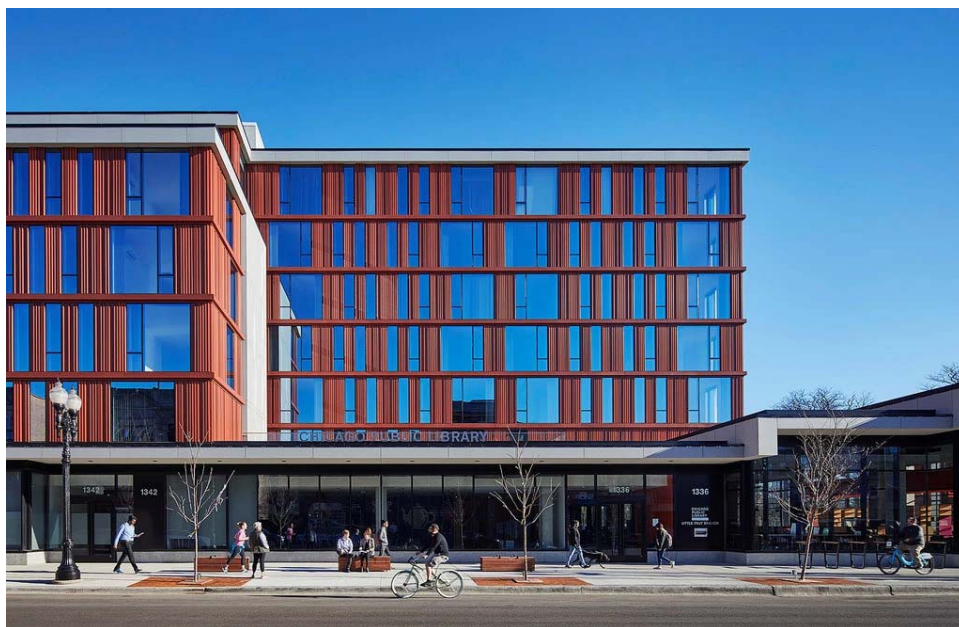
And they share another distinctive feature, too: each project includes a new branch library ("co-location" is the term of art). The libraries are devised as outward-facing hubs for the surrounding neighborhoods, already attracting a mix of toddlers, retirees, after-school teens, job-seekers, not to mention the traditional readers, nappers and borrowers of DVDs.

Co-location is of course not a new idea. Other cities today link subsidized housing developments with libraries, New York included, but Chicago's outgoing mayor, Rahm Emanuel, has made a point of touting the concept, and seeing it through in ways other mayors haven't.

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He leaves office next week with his reputation still tainted by the uproar several years ago following the release of the video of the police shooting of Laquan McDonald. The city's downtown glistens but poorer residents south and west of downtown struggle with shuttered schools and unending gang violence.

These three new housing projects, on the city's north and west sides, are clearly part of what Mr. Emanuel hopes will be his ultimate legacy. The projects mix public housing units with heavily-subsidized apartments and, in one case, market-rate ones.



The Taylor Street Apartments and Little Italy Branch Library by Brian Lee, from the Chicago office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Tom Harris/SOM



The children's area of the Little Italy Branch Library has open spaces and flexible furniture. Tom Harris/SOM

Mr. Emanuel talked often as mayor about the value of public space and good design. People don't only need affordable apartments, as he has said. Healthy neighborhoods are not simply collections of houses. They also require things like decent transit, parks, stores, playgrounds and libraries.

Mr. Emanuel extended the city's subway system, network of bike lanes and popular Riverwalk. He completed the elevated, long-discussed 606, Chicago's version of New York's High Line; brought marquee stores like Whole Foods and Mariano's to grocery-starved neighborhoods like Englewood, and parks like La Villita, replacing a former Superfund site, to communities like Little Village.

He also commissioned leading local architects to design a string of small, civic gems, including two boathouses by Studio Gang and a new branch library in Chinatown by Brian Lee, from the Chicago office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, which I have stopped into on a couple of occasions. It's a neighborhood linchpin and landmark.

Mr. Emanuel's predecessor, Richard M. Daley, who tore down what remained of Cabrini and began to replace old, debased developments with New Urbanist-style mixed-income ones, gave Chicago Millennium Park and loads of planted flowers. He built cookie-cutter library branches, police and fire stations. I toured the Edgewater library one morning, a two-story, brick-and-concrete box, about as inviting from the outside as a motor vehicle bureau office and ostensibly indistinguishable from one.

The cookie-cutter model was conceived to lower building costs and insure a kind of architectural equivalence across diverse neighborhoods. Library officials tell me the one-size-fits-all design invariably needed some tweaking, from site to site, so it didn't turn out to be especially economical. And the common denominator obviously did nothing to beautify Chicago or celebrate communities with distinct personalities and desires.

Mr. Emanuel adopted a different model. Capitalizing on the city's architectural heritage, he touted striking new civic architecture as an advertisement for the city and a source of community pride. Distinguished civic buildings in underserved neighborhoods constituted their own brand of equity. Good architecture costs more but it pays a dividend over time.

The three new housing projects partner the Chicago Housing Authority with the Chicago Public Library system and two private developers, Evergreen Real Estate Group and Related Companies. Working with Eugene E. Jones, Jr., who runs the Housing Authority, Mr. Emanuel persuaded federal officials that public libraries could be co-located with public housing projects without putting federal housing subsidies at risk.

That freed up streams of money for the co-location idea, which was partly strategic: the library helped sway community groups resistant to public housing in their neighborhoods.

But co-location was also just plain good urban planning. In cities across the country, branch libraries, which futurologists not long ago predicted would be made obsolete by technology, have instead morphed into indispensable and bustling neighborhood centers and cultural incubators, offering music lessons, employment advice, citizenship training, entrepreneurship classes and English-as-a-second-language instruction. They are places with computers and free broadband access. (One in three Chicagoans lacks ready access to high-speed internet.)

For longtime neighborhood residents and tenants of the new housing projects, the branches at the same time provide common ground in a city siloed by race and class.

A city-run architecture competition in 2016 attracted submissions from 32 local firms. The winners were John Ronan, the architect who did the beautiful Poetry Foundation headquarters in downtown Chicago; Mr. Lee from Skidmore; and Ralph Johnson, who also designed the O'Hare international terminal, from the local office of Perkins + Will.

The libraries share real estate with the apartments but maintain separate entrances. The apartment blocks are designed to command views from a distance; the glassed-in libraries, to command the street.

Mr. Johnson's project, the \$34 million Northtown Affordable Apartments and Public Library, near Warren Park, is a four-story snaking structure, shaped like a twisty garden hose, trimmed in fluorescent green, backing onto a historic bungalow district, along a stretch of avenue that features a Jiffy Lube and Mobil station. It's meant to be, and is, a beacon and an eye-catcher.

The building's upper floors include 44 one-bedroom apartments for seniors. They perch atop a bright, glazed, double-height, 16,000 square foot library, which curves around an interior, teardrop-shaped garden, the library's roof doubling as a terrace for the housing tenants. The apartments I saw looked great, with floor-to-ceiling windows. A community garden in the back helps negotiate the tricky transition between the bungalows and the busy avenue.

Chris Ronan's Independence Library and Apartments, in Chicago's Irving Park neighborhood, a \$33.4 million project, tells a similar story. Evergreen is again the developer. The apartments, one- and two-bedrooms, as at Northtown, are all subsidized for 44 seniors and the library occupies the ground floor. The six-story apartment block is a vivid, snowy white tower with rounded corners, clad in corrugated metal, punctuated by multicolored balconies.

The library juts toward the street. It's a soaring, two-level affair, with a music studio and makers' workshop tucked into a corner, towering concrete columns, bleacher seats and a mezzanine facing a big, teak-lined roof deck that is accessible from the apartments. The place is welcoming and richly detailed. Light pours in from three directions. Patterned wallpapers, among other touches of color, soften a vocabulary of exposed and striated concrete, with the corrugated metal on the outside serving as radiant paneling for distributing heat inside.

Mr. Lee's project, the Taylor Street Apartments and Little Italy Branch Library, encountered the fiercest community resistance. The blowback ended up reducing the size of the apartment tower and stepping its mass back from the street.

The \$41 million project includes 73 apartments, seven of them market-rate. Related is the developer. At seven stories, clad in Aztec-brick and chestnut-colored panels, the building at once stands out from but also echoes aspects of the neighborhood. There are two floors with glassed-in, single-loaded corridors, the sort of perk you mostly find in high-end residential developments. A double-height library, with a curtain wall and bright orange acoustic baffles, anchors the street.

When I stopped by, moms clustered with toddlers in a bright corner of the library. The place was quiet, dignified and cheerful. Upstairs, views onto empty lots suggested more development coming. The area is gentrifying.

Like the other two, the project seemed both bulwark and boon. This may not be the only way to solve America's affordable housing problem, but it's a start.

MAYOR EMANUEL, CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY AND CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY OPEN INNOVATIVE LIBRARY PROJECTS

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Chicago Public Library (CPL) and Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) today joined local officials and community members to open the Independence Branch Library in Irving Park and the Little Italy Branch Library on the Near West Side. The two new branch libraries are among three innovative co-located housing and library developments being built across the city that are designed to serve as community anchors.

“Chicago is breaking the mold and uniting the strengths of our neighborhood libraries with great housing that is affordable and accessible,” said Mayor Emanuel. “Bringing together world-class libraries together with housing builds strong neighborhoods and provides a place for all community residents to gather, share and succeed.”

The Independence Apartments and Independence Branch are located at 4024 N. Elston Avenue. The Independence Branch has an open floor plan with natural light, flexible space for meetings or independent study, a graduated seating staircase and a large ground floor children’s area viewable by the open second floor adult stacks. The library will replace the former Independence Branch Library on Irving Park Road. The Independence Apartments above the library will provide a total of 44 senior apartments, including 30 public housing and 14 affordable apartments.

“The new and improved Independence Branch Library, together with vital affordable housing for our seniors will provide our Irving Park residents with a vital community anchor of world-class design that will serve them for years to come,” said Alderman Margaret Laurino, 39th Ward.

The branch was designed by John Ronan Architects and constructed through a partnership with CHA, Evergreen Real Estate Group, and Evergreen Construction Company serving as the General Contractor for the Project.

“As a mission-minded development company, Evergreen is proud of the role we're playing in bringing this vital building to life,” said David Block, director of development for Evergreen Real Estate Group. “Senior housing and a public library are a natural fit, and this new development will serve Chicago residents from toddlers to seniors for many years to come. We look forward to completing the residential portion of the project this spring, providing much-needed affordable senior housing to this great neighborhood.”

The Taylor Street Apartments and Little Italy Branch Library on the Near West Side are located at 1336 W. Taylor Street. The single-level library has natural light and an open floor plan with a children’s area and YOUmedia space. The Taylor Street Apartments above the library will include a total of 73 apartments, including 37 CHA units, 29 affordable units and seven market rate units.

“The Taylor Street Apartments and Little Italy Branch Library will together provide a vital community anchor where children and families go to read, learn, discover, and explore,” said Alderman Jason C. Ervin, 28th Ward. “This investment will provide our residents with the safe learning and gathering spaces that the children and families of Chicago deserve.”

The branch was designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) and constructed through a partnership with CHA, Related Midwest, and The Bowa Construction Group serving as the General Contractor.

“Libraries have always served as the foundation of healthy, thriving communities where residents can gather and engage in accessible, enriching activities,” says Curt Bailey, President of Related Midwest. “We are extremely proud to bring the Little Italy Branch Library and Taylor Street Apartments to the Near West Side – providing quality mixed-income housing featuring floor to ceiling windows with unique views of the city and modern finishes and amenities including a fitness center and recreation deck. The synergy between affordable, accessible housing and a beacon of education will allow families to continue to thrive.”

Both the Taylor Street Apartments and Independence Apartments will open in the early spring.

Construction on the Northtown Apartments and Northtown Branch at 6800 N. Western Avenue in West Ridge is underway and will be complete this year. The apartment building will provide 44 senior apartments, including 30 CHA and 14 affordable units. Developed by Evergreen Real Estate Group, the project was designed by Perkins+Will.

Each branch will offer additional programs and services to meet the residents they serve. All three new library locations will offer an Early Learning Play Space, designed to support parents and caregivers in developing their child’s early literacy skills through play; a YOUmedia space for teens to explore digital design, music and recording, technology, 3D and 2D making and more with the help of skilled mentors; and dedicated workforce development support and technology tutors called CyberNavigators for adults hoping to learn basic computer skills or apply for a job online. CPL will continue to partner with expert workforce organizations to deliver trainings on additional skills, such as resume writing, interview prep and industry-specific skills. The new branches will also have traditional library programs, such as book clubs for seniors and intergenerational educational and cultural programming.

“We know how essential our libraries are to the communities of Chicago as neighborhood anchors,” said Chicago Public Library Commissioner Brian Bannon. “Thanks to Mayor Emanuel’s vision, our partnership with CHA, and the creativity of renowned designers, we’re able to provide our award-winning programs inside innovative spaces that reflect the vibrancy of the communities we serve.”

The housing and library developments were designed by three of the city’s top architecture and design firms which were selected following a design competition sponsored by the City of Chicago’s Department of Planning and Development. The competition was part of Mayor Emanuel’s vision to bring world-class design to Chicago neighborhoods and break from the standard, cookie-cutter designs that are common to government buildings. All three architecture firms selected have strong Chicago roots and have won awards for design excellence and innovation.

“We are pleased to see the new library and all it offers the community,” said CHA CEO Eugene E. Jones, Jr. “We are looking forward to the opening of the apartments soon, and know that our investment in these innovative developments will serve neighborhood residents well for years to come.”

Under Mayor Emanuel’s leadership, more than \$275 million in new investments have been made in Chicago Public Library under the “Branching Out: Building Libraries, Building Communities” initiative to develop and modernize community libraries throughout the city. Branching Out focuses on investing in key areas of neighborhood libraries including: modern facilities and infrastructure, and high quality programming with librarians and administrators. Since 2011, 6 new libraries have been built and significant updates have been made at 14 branches. By 2019, an additional 5 new libraries will be built, and renovations at 4 libraries will be complete.

Full library services at the Independence Branch Library will commence at the Community Celebration on Saturday, February 6 and at Little Italy's Community Celebration on Saturday, February 23.

About Chicago Public Library

Since 1873, Chicago Public Library (CPL) has encouraged lifelong learning by welcoming all people and offering equal access to information, entertainment and knowledge through innovative services and programs, as well as cutting-edge technology. Through its 80 locations, the Library provides free access to a rich collection of materials, both physical and digital, and presents the highest quality author discussions, exhibits and programs for children, teens and adults. CPL received the Social Innovator Award from Chicago Innovation Awards; won a National Medal for Library Services from the Institute for Museum and Library Services; was named the first ever winner of the National Summer Learning Association's Founder's Award in recognition of its Summer Learning Challenge; and was ranked number one in the U.S., and third in the world by an international study of major urban libraries conducted by the Heinrich Heine University Dusseldorf in Germany. For more information, please call (312) 747-4050 or visit chipublic.org. To follow CPL on social media, visit us on Twitter (@chipublic), Facebook (Chicago Public Library), or Instagram (Chicago Public Library).

About Chicago Housing Authority

The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) helps build vibrant communities across the city. By using housing as a platform, the agency works with a host of key stakeholders to sustain strong neighborhoods to best prepare CHA residents for the global economy on their road toward self-sufficiency. CHA also provides stable, decent, safe and affordable housing to more than 62,000 low-income families and individuals, while supporting healthy communities in neighborhoods throughout Chicago.