



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

NEWS RELEASE

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Milwaukee Selected for National “Our Town” Grant

Arts Project Selected by NEA for New Milwaukee Public Library South Side Branch

MILWAUKEE – Mayor Tom Barret announced today that the City of Milwaukee has been selected as a recipient of a grant of \$150,000 from the National Endowment of the Art (NEA) to fund the new *Gathering Art, Stories and Place* project at the soon-to-be-opened Milwaukee Public Library Mitchell Street Branch, currently under construction at 9th and Mitchell Streets on the City’s south side.

With this grant, the project team will utilize the library's maker space and other indoor and outdoor gathering spaces to host a variety of storytelling-themed programs, including a visual storytelling festival featuring deaf storytellers, an artist lecture series, writing workshops, a new archive of collected neighborhood stories, and two artist-in-residence programs. A mobile art studio accessible to youth is also planned, providing free art education and cultural enrichment activities.

The plans, developed in partnership with the Department of City Development and the Milwaukee Arts Board, create a unique hub for creative expression and cultural discourse will empower neighbors to create, share, and celebrate cultural diversity through storytelling and art.

“This project supports the City’s plan for the formation and growth of artistic projects that are responsive to the needs of our diverse community,” said Mayor Barrett. “The project also highlights how historic commercial districts can play an important role in Wisconsin’s overall economy, functioning not only as prominent employment and business centers, but often as the foundation of the municipalities they serve.”

Led by the Milwaukee Public Library and Artists Working in Education, the project is supported by Ex Fabula, the Greater Milwaukee Association of the Deaf, and numerous local schools and community centers. The project partners seek to build social cohesion through meaningful interactions between diverse south side community neighbors.

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“We are honored to be selected as an Our Town grantee,” said Milwaukee Public Library Director Paula Kiely. “Not only do libraries inspire and foster new experiences, in an increasingly networked online world, libraries bring our community together and play a significant role in neighborhoods as a trusted entity. By engaging neighborhood residents in this project, we will fulfill the role of the public library in building community pride and investment, ultimately helping the City reach its goals for social and economic prosperity.”

In addition to generous grant funding from the National Endowment of the Arts the *Gathering Art, Story and Place* project will receive additional funding from the Milwaukee Public Library Foundation.

About Milwaukee Public Library:

Milwaukee Public Library is an anchor institution that helps build healthy families and vibrant neighborhoods – the foundation of a strong Milwaukee. Since 1878, Milwaukee Public Library has been a free provider of education and information for residents of Milwaukee and beyond. With 14 locations, and more than three million items in circulation, MPL offers free access to a rich collection of materials both physical and digital, access to technology, classes, exhibitions, programming and more. From toddlers to scholars, MPL serves more than one million patrons who come through its doors annually and many more around the globe who use its resources at www.mpl.org. To offer this wide array of free programming, MPL relies on both public and private funding. Learn more about how to support Milwaukee Public Library at mpl.org/support.

About the National Endowment for the Arts:

Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America’s rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America.

For more information, visit www.arts.gov.

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