**Library Awarded $500K Grant for Outdoor Library Garden Plaza**

VALPARAISO, IN **–** The Porter County Public Library System (PCPLS) and the City of Valparaiso are pleased to announce they have been awarded a $500,000 grant from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) for the Library’s new outdoor Learning Library Garden Plaza in the City of Valparaiso.

“We are excited for the vast opportunities this new space will offer our Library and community,” said Jesse Butz, director of the Porter County Public Library System. “The Library Garden Plaza will be a fun gathering place and I’m excited to see how the community will be able to experience the Library in a whole new way.”

The Learning Library Garden Plaza will be located directly across from the Valparaiso branch of the Library System, on the former Chase Bank property at 106 Jefferson St.

The PCPLS contributed $116,000 to purchase the property and help secure the grant, which was written by the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission. The outdoor plaza will be a whimsical and engaging space for the community and available for outdoor community meetings, events, library classes and more. The project is a collaboration between the Porter County Public Library System, the City of Valparaiso and local community members/organizations.

The grant funds will be used for the demolition of existing structures on the blighted property and to prepare the land for features such as reading chair tree carving, boulder outcropping, stone steppers and pavilion with a shade structure.

“One common characteristic of the best cities and most viable downtowns is a great public library,” said Valparaiso Mayor Matt Murphy.  “I am pleased that the City was able to partner with the Porter County Public Library System to help make the library even better. The new Plaza will be an excellent complement to our thriving downtown, and I’m humbled to see so many local organizations getting involved to help maximize the vision for this project.”

The City and the Library Board have hired Shive Hattery to design the Library Garden Plaza as well as the landscape architects who designed Valparaiso’s inviting Central Park Plaza. “If all goes well, we should have an opening of the new Plaza late this year,” said Stu Summers, president of the PCPLS Board of Trustees.

“We want every person in the community to know that they are a part of this Library Garden Plaza,” said Butz. “In addition to the grant from OCRA, many local organizations have jumped on board to be a part of the new project. Recently, the Valparaiso Rotary committed their Centennial Project to the Library Garden Plaza.”

To explore available sponsorships and naming opportunities, contact Jesse Butz at 219-462-0524 ext. 35126 or jbutz@pcpls.org. Donations for this special project can be made at [www.pccf.gives/libraryplaza](http://www.pccf.gives/libraryplaza). The plaza is planned to be open later this fall.

**About PCPLS**

The Porter County Public Library System aims to provide a center for information and discovery through innovative programming, robust collections and responsive services. The library is a place for all patrons to learn, connect and create. PCPLS consists of five Indiana locations: Valparaiso, Portage, South Haven, Kouts and Hebron. For more information on the Porter County Public Library System, please visit <https://pcpls.org/>

*Photo caption: The Porter County Public Library System was awarded a $500,000 grant from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs to fund an Outdoor Learning Library Garden Plaza at 106 Jefferson in Valparaiso. The City of Valparaiso partnered with the PCPLS to pursue the grant, which was awarded recently in Indianapolis. Pictured at the presentation are Indiana Lieutenant Governor Suzanne Crouch and Valparaiso Mayor Matt Murphy.*

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