

Westport Library breaks ground on major renovation project

By Erin Kayata



Photo: Alex Von Kleydorff / Hearst Connecticut Media

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Westport Library Executive Director Bill Harmer and Board of Trustees President Joe Pucci join First Selectman Jim Marpe and donors Christian Trefz, Nancy Beard, Tom McNerney and others in breaking ground on ... [more](#)

WESTPORT — When five-year-old Julian Hinojos got to the Westport Library's Groundbreaking Ceremony to kick off its Transformation Project, he wasn't interested in the yellow hard hats, shovels or buckets of dirt to symbolize the project's start. In fact at the event, Julian kept asking his mother, Hilary Nordholm, if they could go to the kid's room to pick out a book.

Nordholm, wife of library trustee Adrian Hinojos, said this is typical of Julian and his sister, Tess, 3. Nordholm often takes the two to the children's room to pick out books or to the library's maker space. They also participated in the library's summer reading challenge and regularly come to reading programs. The Jesup Road building already holds a special place in the youngsters' hearts and Nordholm is looking forward to now

seeing the library grow with her children as it undergoes its long-awaited Transformation Project.

“What’s exciting to me is as they’re growing up here in Westport, their imaginations can grow with the library,” she said.

The \$19.5 million project broke ground in a ceremony on Sept. 14. Construction is projected to last 18-21 months during which time the library will be kept open to the community. The end result will include a redesigned entrance to the Riverwalk Level of the building, which will become the home of the adult book collection, as well as a newly renovated gathering space in the main level which will be used as a “flex space” for everyday activities and can accommodate up to 500 people.

Hinojos said he’s also excited to see the improvement of the already existing library space, which hasn’t been significantly updated in nearly 20 years.

“This project is exciting because it is going to make this library into something better,” he said. “Take for example the main room with its stacks of books, chairs and tables, and the makers space. This room will be transformed into a Forum, a flexible and open space, capable of functioning as a 400-seat auditorium, or with movable furniture, as a space for people to gather and collaborate. In short, the library will offer new spaces within its existing footprint.”

“This new space we are building will not only be flexible and responsive enough to support the myriad ways our community learns, but it will also support and encourage the powerful and essential connections we can make with one another in shared spaces,” said library executive director Bill Harmer. “The new Westport Library is designed with collaboration, connection and community at its core.”

Harmer added at the groundbreaking that he is thankful to the Westport families and donors, including First County Bank which is providing bridge financing for the project. Seventeen million dollars have already been raised for the project.

“It takes a village to make this happen and what a village Westport has,” he said.
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