

Highland Park Public Library Closes in Response to COVID-19

The City of Highland Park and the Highland Park Public Library are taking proactive steps to protect residents

Highland Park, Illinois– The Highland Park Public Library (the Library) in partnership with the City of Highland Park (the City), has been closely following developments as the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation continues to evolve with attention to the impact on vulnerable populations. As a proactive measure, the Library will close at the end of business (9:00 PM) today, Thursday, March 12 and remain closed until further notice.

Library Executive Director Jane Conway said, “based on advice from reliable health and safety resources, closing the Library will help prevent the spread of illness and is in the best interest of our community.” She continued, “While the risk to residents of Highland Park remains low at this time, implementing social distancing is a recommended strategy for reducing person-to-person infection with diseases like COVID-19. The Library’s high foot-traffic of approximately 1,000 visitors per day with extensive programming and high-use public spaces, like computer stations pose unique risks in a pandemic situation.” This precautionary action is in line with guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health, which on Wednesday evening released new guidance that prompted the Library’s leadership to act.

Conway consulted with the Board of Trustees, Mayor Nancy Rotering, the City Council, and City Manager Ghida Neukirch before making the decision. “The Library will make every effort to maintain service to the community,” Conway said, noting that staff are prepared to implement standard and creative solutions. Books, movies, and other materials will be available to check out via a self-service pick up location at the Library’s lower level. To check out materials, cardholders can call the Library at (847) 432-0216 or place a hold at hplibrary.org.

Additionally, the Library is boosting its Wi-Fi signal so that it’s accessible in the Library’s parking lot. Those who need to access the internet can do so in the safety and comfort of their own vehicles. Cardholders can also check out a mobile hot spot, which provides a free internet connection when connected to a smartphone, tablet, or laptop.

All of the Library’s digital services will remain available during the closure and can be accessed at hplibrary.org. Cardholders can check out e-books or e-audiobooks. For children, Tumble Book Library offers talking books, puzzles, and games. Movies, TV shows, and music can be downloaded or streamed with the online resources hoopla or kanopy. Online courses, digital magazines, and more are also available.

To apply for a Library card, call (847) 432-0216 or visit hplibrary.org and click on My Account. For more information about Library services during this temporary closure period, visit hplibrary.org.

The City of Highland Park is working collaboratively with partners to ensure a prompt, proactive response. On Tuesday, March 10, the City hosted a meeting to discuss

strategies for collaboration, communication, and emergency preparedness, and invited partners from the City of Highwood, Village of Deerfield, NorthShore University HealthSystem, the Lake County Health Department, Moraine Township, the Park District of Highland Park, the Highland Park Public Library and School Districts 109, 112 and 113. The group will continue to meet weekly to facilitate the flow of information, share resources, and avoid duplication of efforts.

Additional resources about coronavirus may be found at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). The City of Highland Park is closely monitoring this developing situation in partnership with the Lake County Health Department and the Illinois Department of Public Health. Information about the City of Highland Park's response may be accessed at [cityhpil.com](https://www.cityhpil.com), via social media and through the City's eNews. Residents are also encouraged to sign up for Smart911, the City's emergency alert system, at [smart911.com](https://www.smart911.com).