

CRS Insights

Obama Library Likely Headed to Chicago's South Side

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On April 30, 2015, many media outlets, including the [Washington Post](#) and [Chicago Sun-Times](#), reported that President Barack Obama plans to announce that his future Presidential Library and Museum will be located on the South Side of Chicago. The bid to locate the library on Chicago's South Side was submitted by the University of Chicago, which was competing with proposals from the University of Illinois at Chicago, Columbia University in New York City, and the University of Hawaii in Honolulu.

Presidential libraries are managed by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). This proposed presidential library would be the official depository for the presidential records from the Obama Administration. Although the library will likely be owned and administered by the federal government, the review of proposals for the library's location and design was facilitated by the [Barack Obama Foundation](#), a private, tax-exempt charity established in January 2014. This foundation is comparable to the private organizations involved with the design and construction of other presidential libraries. Like other presidential foundations, the Barack Obama Foundation is responsible for partnering with NARA and providing a substantial part of the funding for any future library structures. Unlike the other foundations, however, the Barack Obama Foundation will be the first to support a presidential library established since the enactment of the [Presidential Historical Records Preservation Act of 2008](#), which requires higher levels of private financing.

Congressional Review

Although the President has selected the site for his future library, his decision does not become final until the Archivist of the United States has approved the plan and Congress has been provided an opportunity to express any disapproval. Under the [Presidential Libraries Act](#) (PLA, P.L. 84-373), passed in 1955 and subsequently amended in 1986, 2003, and 2008, Congress is provided 60 days of continuous session in which it can review and, if necessary, take action to stop the proposal.

Construction and Financing for the Library

The Presidential Libraries Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-323) amended the PLA to require significant private financing for future libraries and limit the size of library facilities. As part of these changes, private endowments were required to fund 20% of total construction, acquisition, and improvement costs for the site. Subsequent amendments in 2003 and 2008, however, increased this endowment requirement to 40% and then 60%, respectively. The Barack Obama Foundation will be the first private foundation required to meet the 60% endowment threshold. [According to the Chicago Tribune](#), by the end of 2014 the foundation had raised between \$2.9 million and \$6.2 million of the projected \$500 million that will be required.

The 1986 amendments also established limits on public financing for library facilities that exceeded 70,000 square feet. Any construction beyond that square footage cap requires gradual increases in the endowment percentage. This square-footage restriction has applied to all presidents since George H. W. Bush.

The Presidential Library System Nationwide

The Barack Obama Presidential Library and Museum would become the 14th presidential library maintained by NARA, and the 5th associated with a university. As a consequence, the location of the library in Chicago would continue a recent trend in the establishment of presidential libraries. The first four presidential libraries—Roosevelt, Truman, Hoover, and Eisenhower—were located in the Presidents' hometowns or principle residences.

Since that time, many Presidents have chosen to locate their libraries elsewhere, often with an affiliated university. Additional information on these trends is provided in CRS Report R41513, [The Presidential Libraries Act and the Establishment of Presidential Libraries](#), by Wendy Ginsberg, Erika K. Lunder, and Daniel J. Richardson. **Table 1** lists the other 13 presidential libraries currently under NARA's administration and indicates those with university affiliations. In recent years, these libraries have drawn close to 2 million combined annual visitors. In a [study](#) commissioned by the University of Chicago to accompany its presidential library proposal, an economic research firm suggested that the proposed Obama Library could draw 800,000 annual visitors and provide an economic effect of \$220 million per year. According to NARA, in FY2012, the most visited presidential library (the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum) experienced 380,570 visitors. In 2011, [the Archivist of the United States testified](#) that local Chambers of Commerce and State Tourism Boards estimate that each visitor to a presidential library spends an additional \$100-\$200 at local restaurants and hotels.

Additional information on the presidential library system and recent issues surrounding the establishment of these libraries can be found in CRS Report R41513, [The Presidential Libraries Act and the Establishment of Presidential Libraries](#), by Wendy Ginsberg, Erika K. Lunder, and Daniel J. Richardson.

Table 1. Presidential Library Facilities and Locations

Facility Name	Location
Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum	West Branch, Iowa
Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum	Hyde Park, New York
Harry S. Truman Library and Museum	Independence, Missouri
Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum	Abilene, Kansas
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum	Boston, Massachusetts
Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum*	Austin, Texas
Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum	Yorba Linda, California
Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum*	Ann Arbor, Michigan
Jimmy Carter Library and Museum	Atlanta, Georgia
Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum	Simi Valley, California
George Bush Presidential Library and Museum*	College Station, Texas
William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum	Little Rock, Arkansas
George W. Bush Presidential Library*	Dallas, Texas

Source: Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, <http://www.hoover.archives.gov/>; Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/>; Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/>; Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, <http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/>; John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/>; Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, <http://www.lbjlibrary.org/>; Nixon Presidential Library and Museum,

<http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/index.php>; Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum, <http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/>; Jimmy Carter Library and Museum, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/>; Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, <http://www.reaganfoundation.org/>; George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/>; William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, <http://www.clintonlibrary.gov/>; and George W. Bush Presidential Library, <http://www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/>.

Notes: Asterisks indicate facilities affiliated with universities.