

## Historic Jane Addams animal sculptures will have a new home

by [Carolina Wu](#)  
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The last of the Jane Addams homes will come down by the end of this year, but the seven historic animal sculptures that graced the courtyard will be restored and relocated in a new park.

Preservationists got a pledge of \$5,000 Wednesday to kick off their drive to raise \$110,000 to restore the sculptures at an event to celebrate the first step in their fundraising campaign.

The animal sculptures were created by Edgar Miller in 1938, the same year the first Chicago public housing, Jane Addams Homes, was built.



This is one of the biggest sculptures in Animal Court at the Jane Addams Homes.

The sculptures were commissioned by the Works Progress Administration of the New Deal in an effort to bring art to the public, said Heather Becker, chief executive officer of the Chicago Conservation Center, one of the partner organizations in the preservation effort.

“These animal sculptures are his [Miller] rendition of how functional public art can hold our history together. They remain a symbol of what this community collectively remembers over the years,” said Becker.

The seven sculptures will find their new home in the \$3.5 million public park that Related Midwest is building at Taylor and Lytle Streets. Related Midwest is the developer of the mixed-income housing that is replacing the ABLA public housing units. Along with the new park are plans to build a pool, gym, and community center, said Mark Thomas, chief of staff of the Chicago Park District.

Related Midwest announced Wednesday they will contribute \$5,000 to the sculpture fund-raising campaign.

Deverra Beverly, former life-long resident of the Jane Addams homes, said residents are glad to see the sculptures are being preserved.

“You know you always hear things about public housing that are not always a plus, but this is a plus for us,” said Beverly, who also is president of the ABLA Local Advisory Council.

Marquita Gandy, 33, who was born and raised in the Jane Addams Homes, has nothing but fond memories of growing up there. Even her two children occasionally came by to play on the animals.

“Those are the memories you had, once you got on the animal you didn’t get off because it took too long to get on them,” said Gandy, who now lives nearby on West Taylor Street.

“This is a place where everybody came back and felt comfortable with, I don’t care where anybody went, when they come back to visit, they come back here,” Gandy said.

It has always been a goal of the residents to make sure the animals remain a part of history, Beverly said. The next goal for the ABLA council is to create a museum that would give a history of Chicago public housing, she said.

“We need to preserve this history, so that anybody that has ever lived in ABLA at anytime, they would know that these structures are the thing that links us, because when history is gone, everything is gone,” said Beverly.