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turning a page: 'Awesome transformation'

Downtown Tulsa's Librarium opens to visitors

■ Temporary downtown site sparkles

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TIM STANLEY World Staff Writer | 0 comments

The site for the Tulsa City-County Library's new Librarium was not at the top of La Verne Ford Wimberly's list after she first visited it.

It was "filthy, smelly," the Library Commission member said, adding that she initially opposed the onetime grocery store in downtown Tulsa as a temporary location.

But after another recent tour of the facility - which will provide services while the Central Library closes for a two-year renovation - she dramatically changed her tune.

"Seeing the awesome transformation ... the mammoth extreme makeover ... I have nothing but praise," she said. "I cannot wait to show it to Tulsa and surrounding communities."

Wimberly and other library officials, joined by representatives from the city and the Tulsa Regional Chamber, officially opened the Librarium at a ribbon-cutting Tuesday morning.

More than just a temporary branch, officials emphasized, the facility will serve as a testing ground for several new library technologies that ultimately could be implemented throughout the system.

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"Truly, this is the library of the future, right here, today, in Tulsa," library system CEO Gary Shaffer said.

"Our employees are very proud of this facility and have worked tirelessly for months to make this a reality."

Among new library services and equipment being introduced at the Librarium are the latest in self-service checkout and return machines; a DVD dispenser similar to a RedBox machine; and a "technology discovery table" featuring tablets, iPads, Nooks and Kindles.

The Librarium also offers 40 public computers and free Wi-Fi.

Thousands of popular books, DVDs, CDs and audiobooks also are available.

Everything is arranged by subject, like most bookstores, rather than the traditional Dewey Decimal System.

Construction costs for readying the 22,000-square-foot building, a former Homeland grocery store, for use as a library are estimated at \$815,702.

It will be leased for about \$22,000 a month.

Accessibility and parking availability were among the chief reasons for choosing the site, officials said.

Matt Pivarnek, executive vice president of the Tulsa Regional Chamber, said the Librarium helps further the chamber's goals for downtown.

"Yet another space is being repurposed," he said, adding that the facility joins other projects in "building momentum in Tulsa's core."

Furnishings purchased for the building will be used in the renovated Central Library, which is estimated to open in the fall of 2015.

Most of the library's collection, including research materials, will be warehoused. But they will still be available by request.

As for the 50-year-old Central Library building, nearly \$48 million is projected to be poured into its renovation, to include replacement of its mechanical system as well as the addition of a parking garage, education area, garden and other features.

The Tulsa Library Trust has \$15 million earmarked for the project, with the remaining \$32.5 million to be raised privately.

City officials included \$10 million for the library in the \$918.7 million Improve Our Tulsa proposal, which goes before voters Nov. 12.

If it passes, it would leave the amount to be raised privately at \$22.5 million.

Librarium

When: 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday. Closed Sundays.

Where: 1110 S. Denver Ave.

For more: 918-549-7349 or tulsa-world.com/librarium



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