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# Tulsa's newly renovated Central Library slated to open by late summer

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Construction continues at Tulsa's Central Library on Friday. The library is expected to reopen this summer. CORY YOUNG/Tulsa World

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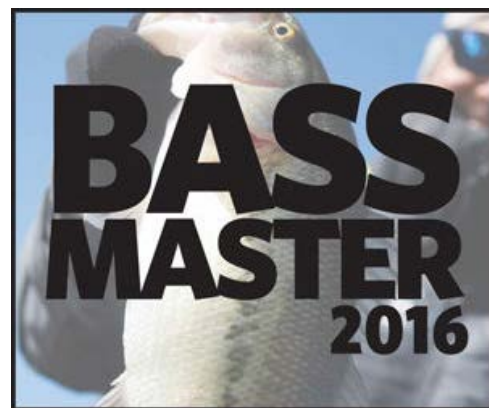
Patrons walking up a floating staircase, children reading in a garden and students studying in glass meeting rooms overlooking downtown are going to be possible after the Central Library's multimillion-dollar renovation.

After two years of construction and \$55 million, the jewel of the Tulsa City-County Library System will be unveiled mid to late summer, according to CEO Gary Shaffer.

The library's reserve fund built over the past decade served as a financial launching point for the project. About \$25 million came from property taxes and other public funding, and the rest was raised by private donors. The

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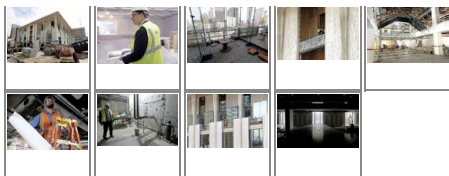


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reserve fund will continue to be used to maintain the system's 27 buildings, Shaffer said.

The updated Central Library has an open floor plan allowing visitors to see from the first floor up to the third. The entrances are more clearly marked, meetings rooms range from large to more intimate and a bigger auditorium.

The project started with a need to replace major building systems not seen or noticed by patrons, such as lighting and heating and air conditioning. That led to a plan for a bigger update to the library built in 1965.

"The systems were at the end of their life span," Shaffer said. "If nothing else, we had

to address that, and it would cost \$15 million and nothing else would look different in the building."

Through the years, library leaders have wrestled with what to do with the aging facility. Voters rejected a 2004 bond proposal for a new library in a different location. Other structures considered had inadequate infrastructure to hold the weight of books and to handle the amount of foot traffic.

When Shaffer took over as CEO in January 2011, he was aware of the Central Library's history and dilemma. This was also a time of growth in downtown, anchored by the BOK Arena that opened in 2008. Surveys also showed the downtown library was the busiest of the branches and patrons came from across the county.

"It was important to keep Central Library here. Downtown has become a hub of the city. We see life coming to downtown, and at a minimum we have to have a branch here," Shaffer said. "It was also cheaper to renovate than to build a brand new building. This is built to be a library."

Among the features:

- Eight study rooms encased by glass will overlook downtown. Each glass cube will hold two to four people and can be reserved for up to two hours using a library card.
- The public entrance will be on the north side — on Fifth Street near Denver Avenue — with access points from the parking garage.
- The atrium staircase remains with a display of past honorees of the Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award, which will include a sound booth display for audio information on each.
- Opposite the atrium will be a "floating staircase" that connects one side of library to another. Its design is a reverse of the grand staircase.
- A Maker Lab will feature tools for innovation such as a 3-D printers and sound recording booth.
- The largest children's library space will be on the first floor.
- A four-level parking garage with 143 spaces will allow drivers to enter off Fourth and Fifth streets. Fees have not been set, but the cost will be lower for library users.
- A garden will be landscaped between the library and parking garage with capacity for about 200 people.
- The octagonal Aaronson Auditorium has been re-formed into a square shape with recessed lighting. The change in the room's footprint increased the capacity from about 200 to 260.
- A Starbucks coffee shop will be located on the first floor.

The lower level is the Center for Learning and Creativity funded by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation. It is a space for groups, primarily students and educators, to work on problems and projects.



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"This is my favorite part of the library," Shaffer said. "I love that it's a center of creation and that ideas are going to be born here."

Architects of the project are the Minneapolis-based firm MSR Design (Meyer Scherer & Rockcastle) and the local firm of Crafton Tull. The designers spoke with the original architect of the building, Charles Ward, who created the building more than 50 years ago. The numbering of the floors will change to reflect Ward's original plans.

"It's neat to see it come to life," Shaffer said. "In another month, it's going to look very different."

As with every downtown library in the country, homeless patrons have as much right to use the library as those with homes. The library entered into an agreement with the nonprofit Family & Children's Services to connect people with social services. It's a position housed at the library that is funded by the Anne and Henry Zarrow Family Foundation.

"It's everybody's library," he said. "The social worker from Family & Children's Services has been very helpful, and we've had success with the partnership."

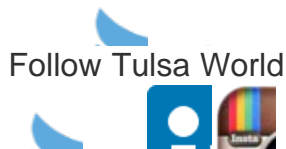
The building's systems have been replaced using the most current energy-saving technology. AAON donated at least \$1 million worth of heating and cooling units. An active chilled beam system is used, which is a type of convection HVAC process expected to save money.

Also, the library has a water system that will collect rainwater and recycle into its lawn irrigation. No city water will be used for landscaping.

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