



GUFFEY'S REPORT

Demolition in downtown library nears completion

Construction slated to begin in July

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In celebration of National Library Week, Tulsa City-County Library CEO Gary Shaffer showed the progress made in Central Library.

"Demolition is about 70 to 75 percent complete," Shaffer said.

The \$47.8 million project has been in the works since 2011, according to the library CEO. Moving out of the library took place in August and September of 2013 and demolition began in January. Shaffer said he hopes construction can begin in July.

"We're excited to get started," Shaffer said. "It is said that construction is the easy part it's the planning and the preparation that is the most difficult. We've spent a lot of time doing that."

TCCL hopes the long planning pe-

riod will pay off big. The approximately 135,443 square foot facility opened in 1965 as a state-of-the-art library, bringing in visitors from all over.

"It was the library of the future. People came from all across the country and around the world to see what a library could be," said Shaffer.

Since that time, the library has become outdated.

"Over time it has been well-loved, well-used and a little well-worn," Shaffer added.

The almost two-year construction project is planned to reach completion in Spring 2016. At that time the library will open with features including a STEM learning center, an education center, collaborative spaces, maker spaces, a children's garden and coffee shop.

"These are things we don't typically associate with libraries, but they are things



Tulsa City-County Library CEO Gary Shaffer

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that are being incorporated in libraries across the country. It makes sense for Tulsa to participate in these changes," Shaffer said. "It is going to be geared toward the 21st century customer. The fact of

the matter is people are using libraries in different ways. ... Libraries are less book warehouses and more places where people

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convene, collaborate and create.”

Throughout the renovation process, TCCL's number one goal is providing tools for Tulsa's children to be able to compete globally.

“It will have a STEM learning center teaching children science, technology, engineering and math exposing them to those skills they're going to need,” Shaffer said. “On the lowest floor it will feature an education center for children to learn something called ideation, ideation being creative thinking skills. We want to make sure our children have the tools they need to make them active and vibrant participants [in the future workforce.]”

“Public libraries are often referred to as ‘the people's university.’ Providing resources, programming and workshops, as well as access to community expertise to help guide and deliver hands-on learning opportunities is extremely important to the library,” TCCL Deputy Director Suanne Wymer told *TB&LN*.

“It is our goal at Central Library to inspire students of all ages to create, collaborate and communicate while acquiring competencies with 21st century tools and learning skills.”

The library however will not be only for children. Central Library is designed to include resources for Tulsa's business community as well.

“The renovated Central Library will offer a dedicated business center to help entrepreneurs and businesses easily leverage library resources to build successful companies,” said Wymer. “Oklahoma is well-known for its entrepreneurial spirit. The research center at the Central Library has long been at the forefront in assisting new business enterprises as well as providing resources for existing small and large businesses.”

The Librarium, 1110 S. Denver, the temporary downtown library space, is a testing ground for much of the technology that will be used in the Central Library upon completion.

“The Librarium is very much a sneak peak of what the Central Library will be like: the same type of furnishings and the same service model. We are using it as a laboratory for library service moving forward,” Shaffer said. “Vendors have lent us equipment so we have some of the latest in library equipment and we're working with that.”

Moving forward TCCL is still gathering funds for the Central Library project. Of the \$47.8 million, the public has provided approximately 50 percent of funds. According to Shaffer, \$15 million has been provided by The Tulsa Library Trust and another \$10 million was provided through voters approv-

ing Fix Our Streets. The remaining funds are expected to come from private donors. Shaffer said the donor community has been

highly responsive. TCCL plans to make announcements regarding the progress as the fundraising moves into a public phase. <

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terprises as well as providing resources for existing small and large businesses.”

With businesses in mind, Central Library will provide coworking spaces, as well as a “collaboration zone,” which will allow small groups to share information electronically on a dedicated network, according to Wymer. Prior to closing, Central Library’s research center provided over 40 workshops and seminars in 2013 over topics such as business planning, customer prospecting, franchising, social media marketing and more. Workshops will continue in the renovated facility.

In order to serve Tulsa businesses, Central Library will offer the state-of-the-art technology.

“The building will keep the mid-century theme, but will be completely updated, with the latest in technology. I think George Jetson would be very happy to be here and would feel very at home in the library,” Shaffer said.

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