

Omaha Public Library Master Facilities Plan 2018-2038: Addressing Our Community's Highest Priorities

The population of Douglas County is projected to reach 625,173 people by 2030, according to the Center for Public Affairs Research University of Nebraska at Omaha's projections. The Board of Trustees of Omaha Public Library is committed to creating library facilities that best serve the needs of our growing community now and into the future. OPL's updated Facilities Master Plan addresses those needs, and plans for its future growth.

Two major elements contributed to the development of this plan:

1. Himmel & Wilson's Facilities Master Plan Update 2017
2. Facilities Survey and Forums - Summary.

Both of these documents can be found at

www.omahalibrary.org/2017-updated-facilities-master-plan/.

Plans adopted by the Board of Trustees will be reviewed by the governing body annually to allow for its growth as a working document.

Facilities Master Plan Update 2017

This update to the 2010 Master Facilities Plan factors in population growth, facility changes and improvements in the intervening years, as well as recent trends in public library service delivery.

Primary questions addressed:

- How well are the existing facilities meeting the needs of Omaha/Douglas County?
- What public library facilities will be required over the next 20 years to continue to effectively meet public library service needs?

Guiding principles used in plan development:

- .75 square foot per capita standard for space planning
- Using a maximum six-minute drive time as the target for the location of new facilities
- Rejecting short term solutions that fail to meet long term needs, and addressing unserved/underserved areas first with long term solutions.

Creating library spaces that provide flexibility and technology resources, and inspire innovation and transformative experiences with the resources they provide, are additional key considerations.

Suggested timelines outlined in the plan are goals for completion, which may

be influenced by funding sources, and reflect the library system's order of priority and capacity to tackle these projects in an orderly fashion. Also this timeline takes into account the ability to see the effect each new facility or facility upgrade has on access so that location and plans for each subsequent project can incorporate that new data.

Facilities Survey and Forums – Summary

The OPL Board of Trustees hired facilitator Susan Koenig to conduct eight community forums (five with the public, and three with library staff), to obtain feedback regarding the recommendations by Himmel & Wilson from the community we serve and the people who know our branches best. Additionally, the Library created a survey based upon the consultant's five recommendations, and it was made available to the public both online and in our branches from July 7, 2017 through September 18, 2017. We received over 3,500 responses, resulting in a valid sample with a 2% margin of error and a 95% confidence rate. The data from the surveys and the forums was compiled and analyzed by the library's development staff, and compiled into a report for the Board of Trustees that was presented at their October 18, 2017 meeting.

The projects below are ranked in the priority established by the survey respondents and forum attendees.

PRIORITY CAPITAL INVESTMENTS FOR OPL:

Southwest Branch

Population growth, and the physical growth of Omaha, have created a service inequity in the southwest section of the city. The recommendation is to find a location north of Q Street on the 180th Street corridor. The survey and forum results show the greatest amount of agreement (80%) to the addition of a southwest branch. The new location would be a 40,000 GSF branch, and will serve approximately 70,000 people currently underserved in the area west of the Millard Branch (13214 Westwood Lane) and southeast of the Bess Johnson Elkhorn Branch (2100 Reading Plaza).

As this new branch will serve a largely suburban population, the location will need to include a robust children's area, teen area, flexible meeting spaces and high tech center where patrons can access and learn programs.

The board, in conjunction with the mayor's office, is considering properties in

that area that meet these guidelines. The City has allocated \$35M in CIP funds to be used for a Southwest Branch and a Downtown Branch. The bond will be on the ballot in May of 2018.

Timeline: This project is in the City's 2020 CIP. The Trustees and the City will be working together on site acquisition and budget for the building project. Trustees will also be looking at costs not covered and asking for help from the Omaha Public Library Foundation for fundraising additional dollars to provide for materials and technology for the location.

Main Library and Downtown Branch/Replacement of Swanson Branch

The second most popular project, according to the survey response, is to replace W. Dale Clark Main Library (215 S. 15th St.) with a smaller downtown branch at or near the existing site that would be approximately 30,000 GSF, and provide service to the approximately 20,000 area residents and the downtown workforce. This space could include a public arts exhibition area, a makerspace and business resource area, coffee shop and retail space, conference rooms/meeting spaces and recharging stations.

Simultaneously, a large central branch will be built. The consultant has identified the recommended area to be along the Dodge Street corridor between 72nd and 90th streets (the Board and the City are in the process of identifying possible locations,) and serve to replace the W. Clarke Swanson Branch (9101 W. Dodge Road). This location will need to be approximately 140,000 GSF and would house administration, collection processing, delivery services, special collections, and retail space for the Friends of the Omaha Public Library to conduct their book sales. The facility would serve as a branch and a research facility. There needs to be quiet reading areas, a children's area and teen space, an auditorium for large programs, meeting/classrooms, a creativity/imagination space, innovation center and computer lab.

Timeline: This project to be addressed in 2025

Willa Cather Branch

The third priority according to the survey is to address the Willa Cather Branch (1905 S. 44th Street) by building a replacement branch on Center Street in the neighborhood of S. 63rd Street (farther west than the existing branch). This will be a new 35,000 GSF branch and serve approximately 70,000 people. The new facility will continue to serve the traditional Willa

Cather Branch patrons, and add service to populations to the west of the existing location and reduce overlap with the South Omaha Library.

A new branch will embrace a larger children's area, leisure reading nooks, meeting space, computer lab, and work stations.

Timeline: This branch to be addressed by 2030

Bess Johnson Elkhorn Branch

Replace the current facility with a new library on the same site, but with access to Hwy 31. The new 20,000 GSF facility will be designed for expansion up to 35,000 GSF in the future. It would initially serve a primary population of 20,000 within the six-minute drive time, and eventually serve approximately 60,000 people.

This library will need a large children's area, leisure reading area, teen space, study/work spaces, technology center, creativity space, meeting/classrooms and potential retail space.

Timeline: This branch to be addressed by 2035

Saddlebrook Branch (14850 Laurel Avenue)

Replace the Saddlebrook Branch with a new, stand-alone facility on Fort Street near N. 156th Street. This new 15,000 GSF facility will be designed for expansion up to 25,000 GSF in the future. The new facility replaces the undersized Saddlebrook Branch to initially serve a population of approximately 20,000, and eventually provide primary library service to 30,000 people within a six-minute drive-time.

This branch will need a robust children's area, teen space, innovation center, technology area, study areas, and meeting rooms.

Timeline: This branch to be addressed by 2038

Next Steps

This Master Facilities Plan is a working document of the Board of Trustees of Omaha Public Library. It will be reviewed annually to allow for its growth and response to changing library demands, and as a guideline to enlist the support of elected officials, the philanthropic community, and patrons.

Approved by the Board of Trustees
of the Omaha Public Library, February 21, 2018