



City of Omaha  
Jean Stothert, Mayor

**Office of the Mayor**  
1819 Farnam Street, Suite 300  
Omaha, Nebraska 68183-0300  
(402) 444-5000  
FAX: (402) 444-6059

November 23, 2021

(Omaha, NE) – The first steps to relocate the W. Dale Clark Library to a new downtown location are underway with an opening date planned for fall 2022.

Customer-focused services including materials checkout, meeting spaces, and computer access will move to 1401 Jones, four blocks south of the current location on 14<sup>th</sup> Street between Douglas and Farnam. Administrative offices and central distribution will move to a vacant Shopko store at 84<sup>th</sup> & Frederick.

The moves implement recommendations first made more than ten years ago.

In 2010, and again in 2017, a consultant's review of Omaha Public Library (OPL) facilities recommended replacing the W. Dale Clark library and moving central distribution, which is currently located at the downtown branch. OPL contracted with Himmel & Wilson Library Consultants to develop its 2010 Facilities Master Plan and the plan update in 2017.

The 2017 Master Plan described the W. Dale Clark library as dated, inefficient, and underutilized and said the building design makes it costly to operate. "Replacement of the main library should be seriously considered," said the consultant's report. It recommended a new downtown location near the current site, with approximately 30,000 square feet.

"The Jones Street location meets both the consultant recommendations and our goals, to provide excellent library services in a redesigned library that remain convenient and accessible to our customers," said Mayor Jean Stothert.

Preparations for the move will begin in early 2022, prior to the reopening of the Gene Leahy Mall on Memorial Day weekend. The current library location, on the west end of the Mall is a key component of the riverfront redevelopment. Numerous developers are interested in the property.

"New development brings new employees, residents and amenities to downtown Omaha, it's all connected," said Mayor Stothert. "In its 2017 report, Himmel & Wilson recognized that public libraries are important for economic revitalization and community transformation. That's what we will accomplish by implementing the recommendations of the Facilities Master Plan."

Mayor Stothert has signed a Letter of Intent to lease 1401 Jones from the White Lotus Group for ten years, with an option to purchase the building, or opt out of the lease after five years. The annual lease cost is \$465,000.

The estimated cost to design, renovate, and equip the building is \$3 million, to be split evenly between the City and White Lotus Group. The City plans to use a combination of funding sources including the General Fund, bonds, and savings from relocating the branch and administrative operations.

The 42,000 square foot building has three floors. The City will lease 30,000 square feet on two levels for walk-in library services.

The Mayor also signed a Letter of Intent to lease the former Shopko store at 3020 S. 84<sup>th</sup> St. (84<sup>th</sup> & Frederick) from Frederick Square LTD. The 89,312 square foot building will be remodeled to house OPL administration, circulation, and central distribution. The 10-year lease has options to renew. The City will pay \$405,000 annually to lease the building, plus an estimated \$500,000 for remodeling.

The City has received a proposal to oversee the transition to the new spaces, including design and construction management at a cost of \$360,000. It is estimated the process will take ten months.

The agreements need approval from the Library Board of Trustees and Omaha City Council.

"We are excited to work with the Mayor's office on this major endeavor. We are committed to continue to serve our patrons downtown and across the city during this major transition," said Mike Kennedy, Board of Trustees President.

OPL is also developing a strategic plan which will focus on library services and programs over the next 3-5 years. The strategic plan will be presented to the Board of Trustees in March.

## **RELOCATION OF DOWNTOWN LIBRARY BRANCH, ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES AND CENTRAL DISTRIBUTION**

### **WHY MOVE AND WHY NOW?**

The W. Dale Clark Library opened in 1976 and was renovated in 1995. The 2017 Facilities Master Plan described the library as dated, inefficient, and underutilized and said the building design makes it costly to operate. The move to a new downtown branch facilitates future development of the current location on the block from 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>, Douglas to Farnam. There is already significant interest in developing that block, which is at the west end of the new RiverFront so it's important the library property is available soon after the Gene Leahy Mall opens on Memorial Day weekend.

### **WHAT LIBRARY SERVICES WILL MOVE TO 1401 JONES?**

All services currently available to patrons will move to 1401 Jones, including materials checkout, meeting spaces, and computer access.

### **ARE THERE MATERIALS CURRENTLY AT W. DALE CLARK THAT WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE?**

All materials currently available will be distributed to other library branch locations and accessible to the public.

### **HOW MUCH WILL THE LEASES AND MOVE COST?**

The annual lease for the 1401 Jones Building is \$465,000. The estimated cost to design, renovate, and equip the building is \$3 million, to be split evenly between the City and the landlord (White Lotus Group). The City will pay \$405,000 annually to lease the vacant Shopko store plus an estimated \$500,000 for remodeling. The actual moving costs are still being estimated.

### **WILL THERE BE ANY PERSONNEL CHANGES?**

All branch and administrative staff will retain their positions.

### **WILL PARKING BE AVAILABLE AT 1401 JONES?**

Limited on-street parking will be available. There are also five parking lots or garages within walking distance to the building with more than 600 parking spots.

### **HOW BIG ARE THE NEW SPACES?**

The 1401 Jones building is 42,000 square feet, the city will lease 30,000 square feet on two floors. The vacant Shopko is 89,312 square feet. By comparison, the current W. Dale Clark Library is 122,490 square feet.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE W. DALE CLARK SITE?**

The city-owned property will be offered for new development.

### **WILL THE NEW DOWNTOWN BRANCH RETAIN THE NAME?**

The City Naming Committee could choose to keep the W. Dale Clark name. Clark was a banker, Omaha civic leader and Omaha World-Herald board member. Donors, including First National Bank of Omaha, United States National Bank, the Omaha World-Herald Foundation, Omaha Public Library Board President Milton R. Abrahams, Mrs. W. Dale Clark, and anonymous donors paid for the design and construction of the building. The Committee could also recommend a different name.

The City Naming Committee is established by city ordinance. Ord. No. 38803, § 1, 8-24-10; Ord. No. 38962, § 1, 3-15-11. There are 9 members; three citizens, plus the Fire Chief, Police Chief, Parks Director, Planning Director, Public Works Director and the Library Director. The Naming Committee has been called together once since 2013 to name Flanagan Lake.

### **IS THE MOVE PART OF A POTENTIAL AGREEMENT WITH HERITAGE SERVICES?**

The move of the downtown library and central distribution is a result of the OPL 2017 Facilities Master Plan recommendations and would happen regardless of current discussions with Heritage Services to invest in the future of the Omaha Public Library system.

# Additional Parking

## PARKING GARAGE/LOT PRICING

- 1 \$5/Day or \$30/Month
- 2 \$5/Day or \$38/Month
- 3 \$2/Day or \$70/Month
- 4 \$5-10/Day or \$75/Month  
(\$10 depending on event)
- 5 Exclusive Parking

