

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the status of the current Oakley Library?

The space that the library currently resides in belongs to Freedom High School and the Liberty Union High School District. In 1999 Freedom High School and the County Library signed a lease for use of the space for a period of five years. This time would allow the City to find another, more permanent location for the library. This lease was extended until 2010. Since July 1, 2010, the County Library has had a month-to-month lease with Liberty Union High School District to use the space inside the Freedom High School Library.

Why do we need a new library for Oakley?

The library is using 3,000 square feet of space from the Liberty Union School District on a month-to-month basis. We need a permanent space that is large enough to accommodate the growing Oakley community. Oakley's 45,000 (and increasing) residents deserve a facility that allows for the operating hours and services of other libraries in the area—an almost 28,000 square foot facility, with over 23,000 square feet dedicated to the library, would be similar in size to the libraries in Hercules, San Pablo, Pleasant Hill and Brentwood.

A new library would include space for story times and other programs, group study rooms, meeting rooms and space to accommodate a bigger collection of materials. Data shows that libraries are good for the community. Both literacy rates and property values increase in communities with a thriving public library.

The library is currently open 40 hours per week. Those hours won't increase in the existing space, as there is nowhere for additional staff to work, but with a larger library, the City could fund additional hours of operation that would benefit all that use the facility.

How big is the current facility?

The current library is 3,000 square feet and is located inside of the Freedom High School Library. Parking can be a challenge at the current location. The high school has events throughout the school year which draw thousands of people to the campus: athletic events, back-to-school nights, graduation ceremonies, etc. The school grounds can also be rented for special events by outside organizations, which adds to parking woes for library patrons.

Are libraries still relevant or needed?

Public libraries are widely used within their communities. If you have not been in one lately, you might be surprised at what you'll find: computers, print services, WiFi, meeting rooms, group study rooms and a wide variety of materials for checkout. You may also come across one or more programs being held in the library, including story



times, book club discussions, author talks, resume workshops, and ESL conversation classes.

Libraries have become much more than books and physical materials to check out. They are now tutoring centers, cooling centers during extreme heat, a refuge during times with heavy wildfire smoke, sites that partner with the state to offer Lunch in the Library, job preparation centers, and gardening club meeting spots. They connect people in the community with resources that are vital to their well-being.

Libraries offer opportunities for lifelong learning, starting with story times for the youngest members of our community. School-age children can expand their reading and report-writing skills as they discover the multitude of books available to them at the local library. Teens can gather to work on projects or meet with others for programs or to join the library's Teen Advisory Group. Adults can get assistance with job searches, resume writing and choosing the right career path. They can continue their education on virtually any subject with the use of the large collection of books and online databases available at the library. Seniors can connect with others through volunteering, participating in programs, and continuing the lifelong learning process.

Is the Oakley library even used?

In 2023, 49,697 people used the library. The number does not include the high school students who visit the library during school hours. That number is higher during special programs. This number is significant as the library can only accommodate 111 people per the fire code.

The Oakley library is also being used by residents that live in the unincorporated area of the County. Approximately 18% of the Bethal Island community use the Oakley library and approximately 16% of the Knightsen community use the Oakley library.

What is the City currently doing to address the library situation?

Baker Tilly was hired to help the City prepare an initial feasibility analysis which was presented to the City Council on January 24, 2023. The City Council directed Staff to focus on an option that would place high density, multi-family housing on the City block bound by O'Hara Avenue to the west, Acme Street to the north, 2nd Street to the east and Ruby Street to the south. The purpose of the housing component is to allow the City to utilize a Public Private Partnership (P3) model, which in this case would allow a developer to provide the City a public facility as part of a private development project. The new library would be located on the Civic Center campus, in the location where the current corporation yard sits.

This initial analysis was promising, and we hired a consulting team lead by Urban Field Studio with Economic Planning Systems and HKIT Architects to further study how we can best create the most value for the O'Hara parcel and site plan the library on the Civic Center campus. The focus of the secondary analysis was to explore further both the residential component of the project and how much realistic residual value the City could generate to help fund the construction of the new library.

How much will a new library and community center cost?

The City of Oakley has assembled various funding sources for a new library and community center that total \$9.5 million, including the residual land value from a planned public-private partnership with a developer to construct housing with a 25% affordable requirement on a nearby City-owned block. The construction costs for a modern library are estimated to be at least \$1,000 a square foot, meaning the City could deliver a 9,000 square foot facility in the near term, but a facility that meets our current and future needs would cost closer to \$28 million.

How will this new library serve others in the Community, like the Veterans of Oakley and the Oakley Senior Citizens?

The project includes a community center component which will serve critical groups in our community, like the Veterans of Oakley and the Oakley Senior Citizens. Although the exact configuration of the community center component of the project is not entirely known at this time, the City is committed to working to provide usable space to both of these groups as well as others in the community.

What is the plan for parking?

The City has prepared a parking exhibit that shows available parking spaces and planned parking spaces for the new Library and Community Center within a 600-foot radius of the planned facility. The exhibit shows a total of 420 parking spaces, with 70 of those parking spaces being on the Civic Center Campus.

What's next?

The City and its partners will continue to seek funding over the next year to bring a new facility to Oakley. We need help from the community and our representatives to make the Oakley Library and Community Center a reality for our families.