Lafayette’s main library reopens after massive renovation project

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It’s a new day for the Lafayette Public Library system.

After a four-year closure and a $10.5 million renovation project, the main library branch on Congress Street is once again open for business. The library held opening ceremonies and a tour on Monday, and will open for regular hours beginning at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday.

“It’s about time,” Lafayette City-Parish President Joey Durel said with a laugh Monday. “Government has an opportunity and a responsibility to build buildings we can be proud of.”

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WANT TO GO?

The main branch of the Lafayette Public Library is at 301 West Congress Street. Regular hours begin Tuesday.

Regular hours are 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday.

For more information, visit lafayettepubliclibrary.org.
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proud of, and to kind of set the bar high. We've set the bar high in Lafayette.”

Library Director Sona Dombourian said the structure held up well after first opening in 1973, but that 40 years passed without any kind of major renovations. In 2002, Lafayette Parish voters approved a $40 million bond issue that resulted in the main branch project, as well as new library branches in Carencro, south Lafayette and Youngsville.

The main branch closed in April 2011 for the renovations. A temporary branch on Jefferson Street was opened during that time to ensure that a library presence remained downtown.

“Libraries are absolutely essential in our communities,” said Meg Placke, associate state librarian. “Libraries provide the foundation for our lifelong learners.”

The renovated main library is 65,449 square feet, with three floors.

The first floor includes a children's area with a story castle, crafts room, two study rooms, a teen area with dedicated meeting space, a cafe and a space for drive-through pick-ups and returns.

The second floor houses mostly the adult fiction collection, along with magazines, DVDs, audiobooks, five study rooms, a meeting room, a conference room and computers.

The third floor is for adult non-fiction materials, the genealogy collection, research computers, a makerspace and eight study rooms.

There is free wifi access throughout the building, along with more than 170,000 materials and 80 public computers.

City-Parish Councilman Brandon Shelvin said the re-opening also was a big day for downtown Lafayette.

“The public library has always been synonymous with downtown,” Shelvin said. “The public library kept me off the street many a day. I'm just elated to see this open again.”