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Subject: Community Services: Fort Worth eyes library, community center spaces for local art exhibitions
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Fort Worth eyes library, community center spaces for local art exhibitions

Fort Worth Report

by [David Moreno](#)

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Photos from the Tarrant County Black Historical & Genealogical Society line the walls of a hallway in the Ella Mae Shamblee Library in Fort Worth on Jan. 8. The Fort Worth Public Library is considering opening that space for community art exhibitions.

(Maria Crane | Fort Worth Report/CatchLight Local/Report for America)

Space inside some Fort Worth libraries and community centers will soon be transformed into art galleries.

City library staffers identified 1,233 feet of wall space across eight branches and 20 centers that could support community art exhibitions that feature paintings, drawings, prints and photographs.

These library branches include Diamond Hill/Jarvis, East Berry, East Regional, Ella Mae Shamblee, Northwest, Southwest Regional, Summerglenn and Vivian J. Lincoln.



The identified space across the locations is equivalent to four large galleries, library director Midori Clark said during a Jan. 6 City Council work session. The spaces will not be used for dance, music, theater and ceramics, she added.

Clark stressed the plans are in preliminary stages though the city's initial investment should be about \$1 million. The first step is creating a library position dedicated to

managing artist inquiries and overseeing these spaces, Clark said.

“I believe (the program) truly will make art accessible to the entire community,” she said. “Arts and culture, public libraries, community centers — our missions are so intertwined and aligned.”

The library’s plan aims to be a solution to fill the gaps left after the 2024 [closure of the Fort Worth Community Arts Center](#) in the Cultural District. That city-owned building, which provided nine galleries and two theaters, [served as centralized space for local artists to launch their careers](#).

The community arts center offered 830 feet of wall space, said Wesley Gentle, executive director of Arts Fort Worth, which managed the building for more than two decades.

City officials [briefly explored leasing the arts center to Texas Christian University](#) but did not move forward due to concerns about the 72-year-old building’s overall condition and the \$30 million repairs needed to safely occupy it. Some arts advocates [continue to fight for the building’s future](#).

“This is not a replacement for the community arts center in any way,” Clark told council members. “But I hope this will be a really awesome opportunity to partner with the visual arts community to create a really cool program.”



Fort Worth Public Library director Midori Clark speaks about literacy during a meeting at the Como Community Center on April 15, 2025.

(Billy Banks | Fort Worth Report)

The library department is exploring a resident program for artists across disciplines as part of programming at the [future downtown branch](#). The new library, located in the old YWCA building, will have gallery space for visual arts and a ballroom with a performing arts stage.

The downtown library’s opening date has yet to be determined as city staff work to secure funding needed for the building’s restoration.

Council member Macy Hill, who represents the Cultural District, expressed support in

ensuring emerging artists have multiple places to display their works.

“People that would have never ventured down to the heart of the Cultural District will now have an opportunity to go to their community center and see an artist they may have never heard of and would have never seen otherwise,” she said.

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