

Architect Project Statement

<u>Place/Project Name</u>	<i>West Las Vegas Library</i>
<u>Project Website</u>	<i>https://thelibrarydistrict.org/new-west-las-vegas-library/</i>
<u>Physical Address</u>	<i>1861 N Martin Luther King Blvd. Las Vegas, NV</i>
<u>Development Team</u> <i>Architect</i>	<i>Design Team: KME Architects (Prime Architect) and Moody Nolan (Associate Architect)</i>
<u>Subcontractors</u>	<i>RJC Engineers, HPA Consulting Engineers, GRN Vision, Wood Rogers, Universal Engineering Services, Lage Design, JLLP Consulting Engineers, LC Kitchen & Bar Designs LLC, Schwob Acoustics, Terp Consulting, OCMI Inc.</i>

Project Description

The new West Las Vegas Library stands as a living expression of equity, cultural continuity, and future opportunity. Emerging during the 1930s, the Westside became home to a thriving African American population after de facto segregation confined Black residents and businesses west of the Fremont Street railroad tracks. Though excluded from the glamour of the Old Vegas Strip, the Westside forged its own identity through a vibrant network of Black-owned businesses, entertainment venues, and community leaders whose influence extended far beyond the neighborhood. This new library honors that legacy while offering a forward-looking vision of opportunity, technology, and connection.

Opened in early December of 2025, the library, located at 1861 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., replaces the former West Las Vegas Library, which had long outgrown its capacity. The approximately 41,400-square-foot, two-story contemporary building reflects the needs of a diverse and evolving community and serves as an intergenerational hub for learning, creation, and gathering. The new facility more than doubles the size of the previous branch, providing expanded space for cultural programming, educational services, and community partnerships. Its design reflects extensive community engagement and aligns with forward-looking visions of libraries as civic anchors that connect and support both present and future needs.

Architecturally, the building blends cultural symbolism with contemporary design, establishing itself as a valued community partner and a visible expression of reinvestment in the Historic Westside. Porch-like entrances, reminiscent of Southern architecture, anchor the north, east, and west elevations, opening onto generous plazas that extend circulation outdoors and support flexible programming. These thresholds function as welcoming gathering spaces, reflecting the community's values of openness, connectivity, and shared civic life.

A breezeway courtyard adjacent to the west porch provides shaded outdoor space for social events and pre-function activities connected to the multipurpose event center. Expansive glazing frames views, invites daylight deep into the building, and reinforces visual connectivity between interior and exterior spaces. Native landscaping and integrated urban design elements further embed the library within its context, strengthening connections to surrounding amenities, including the nearby Historic Westside Legacy Park.

The building exterior combines durable, conventional materials with striking contemporary elements, including exposed concrete masonry walls, metal panel systems, glazing accents, shaded courtyards, and a 1,000 square foot LED message board that communicates civic events and community announcements. This investment in contemporary civic architecture signals a broader commitment to reinvestment in the Historic Westside, counteracting decades of disinvestment with spaces that embody dignity, visibility, and momentum.

Inside, a light-filled central lobby anchors the building, offering flexible space for gatherings while providing visual connections to classrooms, study rooms, innovation, art gallery, multimedia labs, and collaborative areas—underscoring a commitment to transparency and accessibility. Interior environments are technology-driven and highly adaptable, supporting evolving programs and diverse user needs.

The library meets LEED Silver certification standards, with sustainability embedded throughout its systems and design strategies. High-efficiency mechanical systems, water-conscious site and landscape design, and daylighting paired with energy-efficient lighting reduce operational costs and energy consumption, exceeding baseline standards and demonstrating a low environmental footprint at both local and regional levels.

Programming within the library reflects the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District's mission to expand literacy, lifelong learning, and equitable access to technology. Key features include:

- Innovation and multimedia creation labs with cutting-edge tools.
- Digital preservation labs for archiving family and community histories.
- A homework help station, teen lounge, and story time areas dedicated to youth learning.
- Adult Learning Program services, including high school equivalency preparation, language instruction, job training, and small-business development.
- Meeting and event rooms, flexible study spaces, and a large multipurpose event center.
- An art gallery, bookstore, and public computers with free Wi-Fi.

The library also offers curbside pickup, a drive-up book drop, and ample on-site parking with EV charging stations, making it highly accessible to the surrounding community. Its location places it within walking distance of neighborhood schools and Enterprise Park, a business hub housing other community-serving organizations.

At a regional level, the library has been recognized with a Community Place Award by the Urban Land Institute. Its mission and design align with the goals and visions of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the United Nations by contributing to efforts related to quality education, reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, clean energy, responsible consumption, and climate action.

By honoring the cultural legacy of the community, offering technology-forward services, and providing dynamic spaces for connection, the New West Las Vegas Library emerges as both a living monument and a vital community anchor. It ensures that the struggles and triumphs of the past are remembered, while creating a space filled with limitless possibilities for generations to come.

Project Impact

The New West Las Vegas Library is more than a building; it is an act of reinvestment, cultural preservation, and future-building for the Historic Westside. For decades, this neighborhood has been defined by both resilience and inequity. Segregation in the 1930s confined Black residents west of the railroad tracks, yet the Westside responded by cultivating a powerful cultural identity. From Black-owned businesses to legendary entertainment venues, the Westside thrived as a hub of commerce and creativity, even while systemic racism sought to limit opportunity. After the 1960s brought desegregation, disinvestment eroded the neighborhood's stability, deepening socioeconomic challenges. Against this backdrop, the new library represents a living monument to the past while serving as a launchpad for future opportunity.

Educational Equity & Digital Access

The library directly addresses persistent educational and digital inequities. With innovation and multimedia labs, a digital preservation studio, computers, Wi-Fi, and interactive classrooms, the library bridges the digital divide that disproportionately affects low-income families. Youth benefit from homework help centers, technology-rich learning spaces, and dedicated story time areas that nurture early literacy. Teen lounges

and STEAM-based programming foster curiosity and prepare young people for careers in science, technology, and the arts. Adults gain access to the Adult Learning Program, offering English language learning, high school diploma preparation, resume building, and small-business development. Together, these resources equip residents of all ages to succeed in a modern economy.

Cultural Preservation & Civic Pride

“The library’s design and programming ensure the Westside’s history is honored. Interactive displays, art installations, and visual storytelling celebrate civil rights activists, entertainers, and community leaders whose contributions shaped Las Vegas and American culture. Special Collections, such as the African American collection, preserve stories of resilience and achievement, ensuring future generations understand the Westside’s pivotal role. By embedding cultural references in its architecture—through high ceilings, wide entryways, open floorplan, vibrant interior finishes, native desert landscaping, and a light-filled central lobby—the library becomes a vessel of memory as much as a site of learning. This acknowledgment of history builds civic pride and reinforces the narrative of a community that turned exclusion into empowerment.

Social & Community Impact

Designed as an intergenerational gathering hub, the library fosters meaningful connections among children, teens, adults, and seniors. Plazas, porches, and breezeways extend the building’s purpose beyond its walls, offering shaded outdoor areas for events, performances, and informal gatherings. Inside, flexible community spaces support everything from cultural celebrations to workforce development workshops. These features create a sense of belonging, where residents can celebrate milestones, access essential services, and connect with one another in safe and welcoming spaces.

Economic Development & Workforce Opportunity

The library serves as a catalyst for economic empowerment. Its job-skills programs, business resources, and partnerships with local workforce organizations prepare residents for employment in Las Vegas’ evolving economy. Entrepreneurs will find support for small-business development, while students can access technology that fosters innovation. Beyond programming, the project itself has generated opportunity: construction jobs and permanent library positions, many directed toward local and minority residents.

Health, Wellness & Accessibility

Libraries are not only centers for learning; they are safe spaces that contribute to social wellbeing. The New West Las Vegas Library enhances community health by providing inclusive environments where individuals and families can access information, engage in cultural expression, and find connection. Its accessible design—complete with on-site parking, EV charging, outdoor plazas, and proximity to schools and Enterprise Park—ensures resources are within reach for all residents, including those without reliable transportation.

Environmental & Urban Renewal

With thoughtful landscaping, shaded courtyards, and connections to the Historic Westside Legacy Park, the library contributes to urban revitalization. These green features create outdoor spaces for learning and leisure, while integrating the building into the surrounding fabric. Investment in contemporary architecture also signals a broader commitment to reinvestment in the Historic Westside, counteracting decades of neglect with spaces that embody dignity and momentum. Designed with sustainability in mind, the library will meet LEED Silver certification standards.

Long-Term Legacy

The impact of the New West Las Vegas Library extends well beyond its walls. It is a symbol of resilience, hope, and possibility, ensuring the struggles and triumphs of the Historic Westside are preserved even as new generations carve out their futures. By combining cultural preservation with educational opportunity and economic empowerment, the library creates a bridge between past and future. It does not merely provide services; it restores equity and belonging to a community too long defined by disinvestment.