



Vote Yes on N!



MITCHELL PARK LIBRARY & COMMUNITY CENTER ARCHITECTURAL RENDERING

FAQ FALL 2008

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

What are the proposed improvements for each library?

- | | |
|--|--|
| √ Children's | Renovated and expanded with City and private funds (September 2007) |
| √ College Terrace | Major infrastructure upgrade is being funded by City (2009) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Downtown | Interior remodeling and renovation <i>if bond measure passes</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Main | Renovation plus program and group work space <i>if bond measure passes</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mitchell Park | New library and community center <i>if bond measure passes</i> |

What is the proposal for Mitchell Park Library and Community Center?

The existing library and community center will be replaced with a new two-story library fronting on Middlefield Road and an adjoining one-story community center with a courtyard setting. The library will have a spacious children's area, a computer training room, quiet reading areas, a teen room, an international languages section, and room for thousands more books. The community center will have a 300-person great room available for library programs and rentals, two kinds of classrooms, and the right spaces for the teen program.

What is the proposal for Downtown Library?

Downtown Library will have more space available to the public because the staff that processes new books and DVDs will move to the new Mitchell Park Library. The Downtown Library plan includes reconfiguring the interior and a substantial electrical and lighting upgrade plus new, accessible bathroom facilities.

What is the proposal for Main Library?

Main Library requires substantial renovation work to add air conditioning and bring the heating, lighting and electrical systems up to today's standards. The proposal also adds a program room at Main to provide a 100-person space for library and group events. In addition, available space under the north and south eaves would be converted into four group study rooms.

What are the benefits of a new Mitchell Park library, an expanded Main library, and an upgraded Downtown library?

- Space for 70,000 more books and DVDs increasing the City's total collection by 25 percent
- Space for people to sit comfortably, work together, and browse the shelves
- Space for programs such as author lectures, book club meetings, computer workshops, literacy tutoring, and group events
- Functioning and efficient lighting, heating, and cooling systems



"We voted for the library bond measure in 1956 and will vote for the library again in 2008."

— Rachel and Elton Bell, residents of Palo Alto for 57 years



"Having come from San Francisco four years ago, we were surprised and disappointed that Palo Alto libraries could not compare to the newly built libraries in San Francisco. We specifically came to Palo Alto for its value on family and education and now is the perfect time to demonstrate our commitment to lifelong learning for all Palo Altans."

— Leslyn Leong



How can I learn more about the plans?

- You can learn about the City's plans by visiting:
http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/knowzone/city_projects/city_facilities/library_projects.asp
- Read the City's auditor's July 2007 report at:
<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=8015>
The City Auditor completed an audit of the library operations in July 2007. The Auditor's primary finding was that "Palo Alto libraries are in poor condition" and the recommendation was that significant facility problems "including overcrowding, poor lighting, and inadequate meeting space" should be addressed.
- Review the Library Advisory Commission's December 2006 report at:
<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=7367>



"I've had the pleasure of using the Mitchell Park library and community center since moving to Palo Alto as a kid in 1972, and now my children walk there. The problem is that while Palo Alto has grown and changed significantly, Mitchell Park hasn't. What a boon to south Palo Alto a spacious library and versatile community center would be; places that can accommodate our diverse, active, engaged community."

—Deirdre Lyell



THE NUMBERS

What is our library system like now?

- 39,027 Palo Alto residents have library cards, over sixty percent of our population
- We have five libraries in Palo Alto and own 274,000 books, DVDs, etc.
- Our libraries had 862,000 visitors last year, more than 2,300 each day
- On average, each item in our libraries is checked out more than 5 times per year
- We checked out 1.4 million books, DVDs, and other materials in 2007

How much will improving these three libraries cost?

The current estimate is \$81 million with \$76 million of that coming from the bond.

How will this be paid for?

A combination of a construction bond, financed by residents over a period of thirty years, private funds, and City funds will be used to pay for the building. The City Council unanimously placed Measure N, the "Library Facilities, Collections, Safety Improvement Bond," on the ballot for November 4, 2008.

Why can't the City pay for this without a bond?

Main and Mitchell Park libraries were built in 1958 with a bond. The City of Palo Alto spends about \$10 million from the general operating budget each fiscal year to improve and maintain our entire infrastructure: roads, sidewalks, parks, libraries, etc. It would take many years of zero funding for all of our other maintenance needs to pay for the library buildings without a bond.

How much does a \$76 million bond cost me?

\$139 per homeowner is a reasonable average annual cost estimate. The City currently estimates that property owners in Palo Alto will pay about \$28.74 per \$100,000 of assessed value on their homes and business locations. Note: the median home in Palo Alto has an assessed value of \$485,000. The actual cost to a property owner will depend on the assessed value of the property.

Will there be a senior opt-out provision?

No. State law prohibits offering an opt-out provision to senior citizens when using a general obligation bond.

What costs are not covered by the bond?

Legally, construction bonds cannot pay for furniture, books, staff, or utilities. Private donations will be solicited for furniture and books. The City Council will fund the additional staff and higher utilities expense for air conditioning from the general fund.

Are the construction cost estimates reasonable?

Yes, the City has reviewed these costs with a panel of experienced local builders and developers to ensure that the costs are reasonable and consistent with other recent local library projects.



MAIN LIBRARY ARCHITECTURAL RENDERING

How is this proposal different from Measure D, which was on the ballot in 2002?

	2008 PLAN	MEASURE D IN 2002
Libraries included	Main, Mitchell, Downtown	Mitchell, Children's
Mitchell Park library	36,000 sq ft	53,900 sq ft
Affects tennis courts	No	Yes
Underground parking	No	Yes

Measure D came close to passing with 61.5 percent of residents voting in favor, but 66.67 percent approval is required to pass a construction bond. The City listened to the concerns of the community and carefully considered them in proposing the new plan.

How do Main library and Mitchell Park library compare?

Main library provides enough space and books for the people who use it. Mitchell Park does not.

	POPULATION SERVED	BOOKS/MATERIALS	SQUARE FEET	VOLUMES PER CAPITA	SQ. FEET PER CAPITA
Mitchell Park	30,155	79,165	9,478	2.6	.31
Main	22,565	121,000	21,313	5.4	.94

Source: Group 4 consultants report, 12/4/2006

How do our libraries compare with other libraries?

Our 1958 era libraries can't compare with the modern libraries our neighbors use and enjoy. Local libraries built since 2000 include San Jose, San Mateo, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Cupertino, and Saratoga.

If the bond passes, what new library services can be offered?

Author lectures for adults, classes on library resources, computer workshops for seniors, literacy tutoring for English language learners, and other activities can take place in program rooms that insulate noise from the rest of the library patrons. These activities are crucial for learning and cannot be offered now at our two primary libraries without disturbing others.

With the Internet, do we still need libraries?

Absolutely. Our library usage has been steadily increasing. In fact, our circulation of 1.4 million items in fiscal 2007 was 45 percent greater than our circulation in 2001. Libraries are places for children to learn to love reading, for the community to gather, and for those without extra resources to access the world of information.

Why do we need small rooms and study areas?

Virtually all modern libraries have these spaces. These areas are great for students after school and anyone working with a group of people on a project. They keep the discussion noise insulated from the rest of the library patrons, allowing quiet reading and group work to occur at the same time.

In what order will the libraries be renovated?

Downtown will be first, then Mitchell Park, then Main.

Where will the library administrators be located?

The library director and a staff of two intend to remain at Downtown. The assistant library director would move from Main to Mitchell Park.

How do the school and city libraries work together?

The City library has a half-time librarian who works closely with our schools to provide information about library services to students and teachers. This work includes providing library cards to students, sharing with teachers the databases that are available online, coordinating information about research projects, and providing programs of interest to parents and students, such as homework help and teen book clubs.

Could Palo Alto libraries be part of the Santa Clara County Library system?

Turning the Palo Alto libraries over to the county would require the passage of a parcel tax and would not affect the facilities at all. A portion of the property taxes that now goes to Palo Alto would have to go directly to the county's system to fund operations. Even if the County library system runs libraries, the city is still responsible for the facilities.

Why doesn't Palo Alto have just one library?

Palo Alto's five library system is part of our history, well-established, and in keeping with the idea of neighborhood services. While there was some discussion a few years ago about centralizing the library, that option was rejected by the majority of the community and by the City Council.

Will smaller branches eventually be closed if we build a new Mitchell Park library?

After several years of community-wide discussions, the City Council has confirmed its policy to maintain Palo Alto's branch system. Children's Library has just been upgraded and College Terrace Library is scheduled for renovation next year. The anticipated bond measure will address the needs at Main, Mitchell Park, and Downtown.



"We lived in Santa Clara and really appreciated their modern library. When we moved back to Palo Alto recently, I found our libraries even more cramped, hard to get around, dark, and dreary. That's why I plan to vote yes on the library bond in November."

— Brian Jakubowski



MITCHELL PARK LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY CENTER

Why do we need a new building for Mitchell Park library?

Mitchell Park library was built 50 years ago, in 1958. It serves over 1,000 people per day in less than 9,500 sq ft of space and is the busiest library in the city. According to an independent consultant, it is one-third the size it should be and has about half the number of books recommended for the population it serves. It does not have air conditioning and is not in compliance with accessibility regulations.

Can't we just expand the existing Mitchell Park library?

That option was carefully considered. The additional square footage would not be sufficient to meet current standards for the population that Mitchell Park already serves. The expansion option would not resolve the traffic safety problem created by the offset intersection on Middlefield Road.

What happens if we don't build a new Mitchell Park library?

Regularly scheduled maintenance such as replacing the inadequate forced air system will trigger the need to comply with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which requires wider aisles and larger restrooms. This will reduce the number of books and other materials in Mitchell Park library by at least 10 percent. This is not an acceptable outcome for the most crowded library in the system.

What does the plan for Mitchell Park and Community Center look like?

Visit www.betterlibrariesforpaloalto.com for detailed pictures.

How was this particular plan selected?

Using input from many community meetings, the Library Advisory Commission (LAC) selected the most reasonable option for our community, taking into consideration cost/benefit ratios, current and future needs for library, the layout of the site, and construction costs. The City Council accepted their recommendation unanimously.

How big will the new building at Mitchell Park be?

The plan is for a 36,000 square foot library that will provide space to accommodate the current and projected needs of south Palo Alto and a 15,000 sq ft community center.

What about the community center?

The community center is currently a separate building. It was built in 1967 and serves as a center for recreation classes and activities. It is also available for meetings and party rentals. It has an outdated kitchen, non-air-conditioned spaces, and unattractive facilities and restrooms. The new community center will have a 300-person room with a catering kitchen that can accommodate author lectures, lunches for seniors, dances, weddings, school auctions, and many other events.

How will the traffic safety be improved?

Automobile traffic will enter directly across from Mayview Avenue, eliminating the dangerous and confusing offset intersection where vehicles currently enter from Middlefield. The plan eliminates the need for children to cross roads when going from the park and schools to the library/community center. Additional bike racks will be available and the city's shuttle service will continue to serve the Mitchell Park area.

How will the parking situation change?

There are currently 129 spaces and limited bicycle parking for the library and community center. The new building will have 138 spaces and ample, convenient bicycle parking.

Will the tennis courts or dedicated park land be affected? No.

What library services will be provided for residents while the new Mitchell Park library is being built?

The City is planning for a temporary facility to be available in south Palo Alto during the construction period.

When would the new Mitchell Park library and community center open?

2012 is a reasonable estimate. This assumes passage of the bond in November 2008, one year to complete the detailed architectural designs, time for bidding on the project, and then about two years of construction.

What are the different library organizations in Palo Alto?

Better Libraries for Palo Alto is a political campaign committee. It was created to educate and inform Palo Alto voters about the need for better libraries in our community. The campaign committee's goal is to pass Measure N on November 4, 2008. www.betterlibrariesforpaloalto.com

The Friends of the Palo Alto Library was founded in 1938 and their mission is to support Palo Alto's libraries and its users. FoPAL runs successful book sales every month and uses those funds to pay for popular programs at the library such as the children's summer reading program and the special guests who speak at the library, as well as collections. www.friendsofpaloaltolib.org

The Palo Alto Library Foundation was formed in 2001 and its mission is to spearhead fund-raising campaigns to support a modern dynamic library system that serves the needs of everyone in our city. PALF worked to secure private donations from the community to rebuild Children's Library and to fill it with new furniture and bookshelves. www.palf.org

The Library Advisory Commission is a seven-member citizen group appointed by the City Council to advise the city on library policy issues. www.cityofpaloalto.org/library/about/commission.html

Please visit www.betterlibrariesforpaloalto.com for more information and learn how you can help make it happen in November 2008.