



Shaping the Future of Your Neighborhood Library

 The Berkeley Public Library Branch Libraries Facilities Master Plan



Berkeley's four branch libraries, the West Branch, the North Branch, the Claremont Branch, and the South Branch with its Tool Lending Library, served over 750,000 people during the 2007 fiscal year. Our branch libraries are a neighborhood resource for more than books and magazines. They're a place to find books, music, and movies, use computers, get help with reading or homework, and connect with your community. These libraries are well-used and loved, but they are badly in need of attention. 🌸

To find out the current state of the branch libraries and determine how to best remedy the problems, we hired the Berkeley-based architecture and planning firm, Noll & Tam. Working with engineers and other specialists, they evaluated the structural condition of the buildings. Library staff and members of the general public, including the disabled community, provided input on the experience of using the libraries. The information from this evaluation is compiled in the ***Branch Libraries Facilities Master Plan***, completed in July 2008, available for viewing at every branch or online at www.berkeleypubliclibrary.org.

Overall, the evaluation found that the buildings are dark and cramped, the wiring and plumbing systems need upgrading and repair, and the ventilation systems aren't adequate. The buildings are not fully-accessible for the disabled. Most of the buildings are not earthquake-safe. There are wide-spread problems with mold, rot, and pests, as well as lead and asbestos. Materials are crowded together and out of reach. There is not enough space for staff to help visitors or for computers or library programs. There is not enough space to simply sit and read.

While these problems may seem insurmountable, the ***Facilities Master Plan*** also includes recommendations that will allow each branch library to meet the changing needs of the people they serve. And, in keeping with Berkeley's Green Building Initiative, all plans for renovation and expansion of the historic buildings will meet specific green building criteria. Where possible, we opt for renovating the beautiful historic buildings with open, accessible floor plans, and well-lit, comfortable spaces. We are very excited to present this summary of the ***Facilities Master Plan*** and the promise it brings for our branch libraries. We see a bright future for these important neighborhood resources, with ample room, easy access for all, and safe buildings that provide welcoming, inviting community spaces for many years to come.



North Branch

North Branch, constructed in the California Spanish style in 1936, is a beautiful and well-loved part of the North Berkeley community, and in October 2001 was designated City Landmark #243. The busiest of the four branches, North Branch houses a varied collection of books and materials, offers a wide range of youth and adult programs, and hosts the long-running quilt show. North Branch is a popular and frequent destination for children from the area's five elementary and middle schools. 🌿

North Branch hosted over 300,000 visits during this past year and offered over 200 community events, and patrons checked out over 200,000 items. Given its popularity, the branch needs space for comfortable seating and quiet reading, programs, after school group study, a well-functioning service desk, and to achieve ADA compliance. The Branch will gain a substantial addition to address these issues, along with restored or refurbished historic features, and enhanced landscaping.

Issues of concern

- Lack of sufficient programming, meeting, and common space
- Lack of adequate staff office and work space
- Lack of sufficient space for collections and materials
- Inadequate and outdated electrical, ventilation and plumbing systems
- Structural damage from leaks, decay, and pests
- Not ADA compliant

Recommendations

- Increase existing 5,390 sq ft building by 35%, approximately 1,900 sq ft of additional space
- Make existing building seismically safe
- Repair or rebuild all windows
- Upgrade the mechanical, electrical, and telecommunication systems
- Bring public areas up to full ADA compliance
- Add a fire sprinkler system to the entire building
- Restore existing historic features



South Branch/ Tool Lending Library

The newest and smallest of the branch libraries, South Branch was designed with an open interior floor plan in classic 1960s style. The branch offers a variety of programs and services, including storytimes for young children, and houses an extensive collection of Spanish and Chinese language materials. South Branch is also home to the internationally acclaimed, ever-popular, Tool Lending Library, which offers Berkeley residents access to gardening, home repair, and even construction-grade tools. 🌱



South Branch desperately needs space for additional computers, seating and tables for reading, to house its collections and programs, and to achieve ADA compliance. The Tool Lending Library, which last year checked-out 41,000 tools and operates out of a 500 sq. ft. facility, also needs more space. South Branch will be dramatically expanded to provide a comfortable and welcoming space for reading and community gathering, and will incorporate the Tool Lending Library into the branch.

Issues of concern

- Not seismically sound
- Lack of sufficient programming, computer, and common space
- Lack of adequate staff office, equipment, and work space
- Lack of sufficient space for collections and materials
- Inadequate lighting and seating
- Inadequate and outdated electrical, ventilation and plumbing systems
- Structural damage from decay and rot
- Occasional flooding in rainy season
- Not ADA compliant

Recommendations

Serious structural deficiencies make renovation difficult, unattractive and uneconomical. It will be vastly more efficient and cost effective to build a new structure to house the South Branch and Tool Lending Library. The new structure, which will be seismically safe and fully ADA compliant, will provide a 63% increase in square footage from 5,540 square feet to 8,200 square feet, including increased space for the Tool Lending Library and a larger youth program area.



West Branch

West Branch, constructed in 1923, is the oldest of the four branch libraries. In May of 2003, was designated by the City Landmarks Commission as a "Structure of Merit." The branch serves an active and diverse community and houses the library's successful "Berkeley Reads" adult literacy program, providing over 8,000 hours of literacy education each year. In addition, West Branch offers storytimes and programs for young children, a meeting room for community use, programs for teens and a popular selection of multilingual materials. 🌱



With over 93,000 visits a year, West Branch is a hub of activity. However, branch activities and services are hampered by its small size. The community meeting room is in constant use for literacy tutoring and youth programming, and demand outweighs available space for program events, seating and tables for reading, and computers. The recommended renovations will add much-needed space — including a study room for the literacy program, address structural issues, and restore the original 1923 branch façade and the lovely interior historic details.

Issues of concern

- Lack of sufficient programming and meeting space
- Inadequate and outdated electrical, ventilation and plumbing systems
- Inadequate lighting
- Structural damage from decay, pests, and rot
- Not seismically sound
- Not ADA compliant

Recommendations

- Increase existing 6,230 sq ft building by 38%, approximately 2,300 sq ft of additional space
- Make existing building seismically safe
- Upgrade and/or replace the mechanical, electrical, and telecommunication systems
- Replace existing lighting
- Add a fire sprinkler system for the entire building
- Bring existing building up to full ADA compliance



Claremont Branch

Constructed in 1924, Claremont Branch is the largest of the four branch libraries. A frequent destination for neighborhood families, Claremont Branch serves as a gathering place, where community members can meet to attend programs, select materials, or just socialize. The branch boasts a large collection and offers a well-loved children's program, a long-standing adult book club, and an active teen program, as well as computers and wifi Internet access. ♻️

Over 160,000 people visited Claremont Branch last year, and despite its eclectic mix of old and new buildings, the branch does a good job of serving the many needs of those patrons. None-the-less, the branch will benefit greatly from a modest gain in space and a more efficient interior layout. Claremont Branch will receive a small lobby expansion and an improved interior layout to ease congestion, refurbished or restored historic features, a new historically appropriate and ADA accessible circulation desk, and improved landscaping.

Issues of concern

- Lack of sufficient programming, computer, and common space
- Poor layout, which causes congestion and impedes flow of traffic
- Inadequate and outdated electrical, ventilation and plumbing systems
- Insufficient data infrastructure
- Structural damage from decay, rot, and pests

Recommendations

- Add a small addition of approximately 140 sq ft.
- Repair or rebuild existing windows
- Remodel and expand restrooms in the children's and staff areas
- Add a fire sprinkler system to the entire building
- Make existing building seismically safe
- Upgrade the mechanical, electrical, and telecommunication systems
- Bring existing building up to full ADA compliance



This document provides a summary of the Berkeley Public Library Branch Libraries Facilities Master Plan. To view the full document, visit any of the four branch libraries or the downtown Central Library. For more information, please go to the Berkeley Public Library website, www.berkeleypubliclibrary.org, or call (510) 981-6195.

North Branch

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West Branch

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South Branch/Tool

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Claremont Branch

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