



# Berkeley Public Library

## Neighborhood Branch Libraries

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### About the Library Bond and the Neighborhood Branches

Most of Berkeley's neighborhood branch libraries have not been renovated in more than 30 years, and findings from the recently completed Branch Libraries Facilities Master Plan indicate the buildings have crowded spaces, suffer from structural and infrastructure impairment, are not ADA-accessible and lack the infrastructure to meet current and future technology needs.

The planning process found the branch libraries are aging structures that need improvements to be safe and efficient in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. More telling, it found West and South branches are seismically unsafe. With more than 800,000 visits during the year, the branches need substantial upgrades to ensure a safe environment and an efficient operating system.

The revenue from the bond will bring the buildings up to current code standards; meet seismic requirements; make all of the branches fully accessible to Berkeley's diverse population; provide environmentally sustainable "green" operations; and create adequate space for the Tool Library and the adult literacy program, *Berkeley Reads*. Renovations will include the restoration and preservation of historic features at the branch libraries.

### Common Questions about the Library Bond

- ***Why do the Branch Libraries need more space?***

An increase in space is required to alleviate current overcrowded conditions and improve Library operations. In FY 08, the branch libraries served over 800,000 visitors and checked-out over 700,000 items. The popular Tool Lending Library is too crowded to adequately serve the community even though the staff checked-out over 47,000 tools last fiscal year.

- ***What are the plans for each of the Branch Libraries?***

The Library plans to engage the community and staff in discussions. All plans at this stage are conceptual in nature and detailed planning will need to be done with an architect to move the recommendation to the next stage. The Branch Libraries Facilities Master Plan recommends:

North Branch receive a small addition with program space; restored/refurbished historic features; *green space* (landscape) improvements; net space increase of 1,900 sq. ft. (current space: 5,390 sq. ft.)

West Branch have its 1974 addition replaced to address structural issues; restored original 1923 branch façade and interior historic details; increased literacy program space to include a study room; net space increase of 2,370 sq. ft. (current space: 6,230 sq. ft.)

South Branch and Tool Lending Library be expanded to incorporate the Tool Library program into the branch with substantial increase in space; increased public computers and seating; net space increase of 3,160 sq. ft. (current space: 5,040 sq. ft.)

Claremont Branch receive a small lobby expansion to improve circulation at entry; refurbished/restored historic features and building elements; improved interior layout; improved landscaping; net space increase of 140 sq. ft. (current space: 7,300 sq. ft.)

- ***Will the historic elements of the Branch Libraries be preserved?***

Absolutely! Current plans for renovation include restoration and refurbishment of historic features at the branch libraries as part of any renovation, while improving their functionality into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

- ***Will other locations in the city be considered for library services as part of the library bond?***  
No. The Branch Libraries Facilities Master Plan recommends improving existing neighborhood branch libraries only. All existing neighborhood libraries will remain at their current locations and any additional and/or future service sites would be considered separately.

- ***What will it cost homeowners if the Library Bond passes?***  
The cost varies based on the assessed value of your home. The estimated cost to homeowners would average \$27.00 per year over the 30-year life of the bond, or two cents per \$100 of a home's assessed value.

The City Manager's analysis of its fiscal impact may be accessed on the City of Berkeley's City Clerk's webpage: [www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/ContentDisplay.aspx?id=14124](http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/ContentDisplay.aspx?id=14124)

- ***What will happen if the Library Bond does not pass?***  
The life safety issues that impact the neighborhood branch libraries are serious and must be addressed even if the bond measure is not approved. Since the building hazards have been identified prudent steps need to be taken to reduce the safety problems. However, this will cost more than can be paid out of general operating funds.

Closure of one or more branches because of life safety issues may be one consideration.

- ***Why can't the Library use the operating budget to pay for improvements to the branches?***  
The Library's operating budget goes towards collections, programs, hours, and ongoing repairs and upgrades; it cannot cover the significant costs of major repairs and upgrades.
- ***What accountability measures are in place to make sure the bond monies are spent wisely?***  
The Board of Library Trustees (BOLT) will report annually to the City Council on the use of the bond proceeds.

The Berkeley Public Library prepares annual budgets that are reviewed and approved by the BOLT. All board meetings are open to the public. By law, funds raised by a library tax measure may only be spent on the library.

- ***Will the Library seek input from the neighborhood communities for the building projects?***  
Yes. The Library will continue to engage the community including holding neighborhood workshops with project architects. Information from those meetings will be used to develop plans.
- ***Are there any other measures on the ballot that affect the Library?***  
Yes, the Gann Limit Override. The Gann Override reauthorizes the City of Berkeley, over a 4-year period, to spend the Library Tax originally approved by voters in 1988. This is required by state law every 4 years, and it entails no new taxes. The monies are needed to continue the valued Library programs and services.

The Library does not receive any City general fund monies. Instead, it relies solely on the Library Tax for its operations with some additional revenue sources such as grants, donations, support-group gifts.

For more information, please go to the Berkeley Public Library website, [www.berkeleypubliclibrary.org](http://www.berkeleypubliclibrary.org), or call (510) 981-6195.

North Branch  
1170 The Alameda  
Berkeley, CA 94707  
(510) 981-6250

West Branch  
1125 University Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94702  
(510) 981-6270

South Branch/Tool  
1901 Russell Street  
Berkeley, CA 94703  
(510) 981-6260

Claremont Branch  
2940 Benvenue Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94705  
(510) 981-6280