



Berkeley Public Library - Branch Improvement Program

North Branch Library

Frequently Asked Questions

When is the branch expected to reopen for service to the public?

The branch is anticipated to reopen during Spring 2012. Notice will be provided in advance of the branch opening, including information about the opening day celebration.

Why does the North Branch need to have any work done?

The Library is committed to making all of its branch libraries seismically safe, current code compliant and ADA accessible, as promised in voter approved Measure FF; moreover, the current branch is crowded and lacks modern conveniences.

What work will be done to North Branch?

Complete restoration and refurbishment of existing historic features and windows and an approximate 4,000 gross sq. ft. addition will be added to the Josephine Street elevation. In addition to improved structural integrity and accessibility, the branch will have improved site access, landscaping, exterior and interior lighting and will receive updated mechanical, plumbing, electrical and telecommunication systems. Additionally the branch will have a new meeting room, adequate staff workspace and fully accessible restrooms.

Will the new addition look like the existing historic building?

The design team is following the U.S. Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, which stipulates that any new work should be differentiated from the old work but be compatible in massing, size, scale and in architectural features while all along protecting the historical integrity of the existing building.

The design team has worked closely with Berkeley's Landmarks Preservation Commission throughout the design process to design an addition that compliments the 1936 historic building. It has been a delicate balance, and the result is a respectful two story addition with curtain walls connecting the old and new.

Will the lighting be changed?

The historic fixtures will be rehabilitated and a new contemporary interpretation of the original rotunda chandelier will be installed. New fixtures in the historic spaces will highlight the decorative ceilings and provide improved task lighting.

Has an exterior paint color been decided?

The design team has worked closely with the Landmarks Preservation Commission to determine an appropriate exterior color scheme, which includes maintaining the present color of the walls. The exterior walls of the addition will be painted the same color as the historic building: partly painted concrete and a partly pigmented plaster with cast stone trim that will be similar in color to the painted trim on the existing building. The new addition windows will be a medium brown, clear finish mahogany.



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Where can I view the branch plans?

Branch project information and plans may be viewed on the Library's website or by visiting your neighborhood branch. The direct website link is:

http://berkeleypubliclibrary.org/about_the_library/b-renovation.php

Who are the architects?

They are the collaborative team of Architectural Resources Group (argsf.com) in association with Tom Eliot Fisch (tomeliotfisch.com).

Has the community been involved in the design process?

Yes. Service and facilities surveys were conducted during the *Branch Libraries Facilities Master Plan* (2008) process as well as early during the branch renovation program planning (2009). Four community meetings were held during the conceptual, schematic design and design development phases and three Board of Library Trustees presentation / design workshops were held (2009-2010). Additionally there have been eight Landmarks Preservation Commission subcommittee meetings and four full Commission meetings, all publically noticed and held during the design process.

Is there still a chance for me to provide input?

Yes, the Library always welcomes feedback and input. Comments cards may be filled out at any library branch, via online at http://berkeleypubliclibrary.org/about_the_library/b-renovation.php, or by calling the Library at 510.981.6195.

What will the branch be gaining or losing?

The North Branch will be gaining a 50-seat multipurpose room on the lower level; public and staff restrooms; efficient and ergonomic self-checkouts; improved and well-functioning service desks; and staff work areas that are physically and acoustically separated from public space. The branch also will gain 39% more seating; 45% more computers and electrical outlets for laptop use; 7% more shelving for collections; and an overall facility size increase of 68%.

How will the downstairs space be used?

The main service activities will be on the upper level with controlled access to the lower level. The multipurpose room for library programming and another set of restrooms will be on the lower level, as well as the staff break room, storage and the mechanical and telecom rooms.

Will the branch have to close during construction, and if so, for how long?

The branch will be closed to allow for move out, construction, restoration, and subsequent move in and set up. Notice will be given in advance of closure and the branch will be closed for approximately 14 to 16 months. The branch will have to close for public safety because the site will be considered a construction zone. The extent of work only can be done efficiently if the contractor has access to the entire facility at the same time to coordinate the work on the heating, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, lighting, and data systems between the new and existing structures.



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Where will I pick up my holds when the branch is closed?

The Library will be providing book van service at a location near the North Branch Library for pick up of holds and receiving returns. Van service will be provided during scheduled hours, which will be posted on the Library's website. Patrons are encouraged to visit the Library's three other branches (Central, West and South), which will be open during North Branch construction.

What will happen with the landscaping?

The design team is working with a landscape architect to address the exterior greenscape. Plans include retaining the Myrtle grove north of the building, adding benches and low wall seating in the front, retaining the historic stone kiosk, ensuring for proper drainage perhaps with porous pavers, and using native drought-resistant plants. Increased bike parking will be available around the building.

Are there any green elements you are contemplating regarding construction efforts?

It is a project goal to attain at minimum LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver certification. The design team also is exploring other green options with Stopwaste.org – Bay-Friendly Landscaping (Alameda County), PG&E (Pacific Gas and Electric), and the City of Berkeley Sustainability Team.

How much will it cost to make these improvements to the North Branch library?

The project has a hard cost construction budget of about \$4.3 million to expand and restore the building, not including furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E). All designs are subject to change to meet this fixed budget. The Berkeley Public Library Foundation will raise \$3 million from private donations to pay for the FF&E costs. To help with the campaign, please call 510.981.6115 or email to bplf.org.