



City & County of San Francisco Branch Library Improvement Program

West Portal Branch Library Renovation Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What are the plans for the branch?

A. The Library plans to make the building accessible, and reduce the seismic risk while preserving the historic character of the existing building. A small expansion at the rear of the building to recoup space needed for disabled access and seismic work is included. Also, an elevator will be added and the staff areas enhanced for greater functionality.

Q. What will be some of the benefits of the renovated branch?

- Seismic strengthening
- New restrooms
- A safe accessible elevator with an entrance from Ulloa Street
- New after hours book drop on Ulloa Street at ground level
- Improved landscaping
- Better staff work areas both upstairs and downstairs
- A designated teen area
- Better lighting
- New or restored furniture
- Clearer signage
- New computers
- Flexible Children's Room for easier programs
- Enhanced historic features such as lights, ceiling stencils, and woodwork
- New self-check machines
- A variety of seating choices
- Improved heating and ventilation

Q. When will the branch be closed and for how long?

A. The branch is scheduled to close for construction in late 2004 and reopen in fall 2006 or earlier. During the renovation, library services will be provided by increasing hours at nearby branches, holding programs at neighborhood schools and community centers, and by bookmobile service.

Q. The West Portal Branch was closed in 2002. Why close it again?

A. The only improvement was a much needed electrical upgrade. This time there will be a complete renovation.

Q. Who are the architects?

A. Thomas Hacker Architects Inc., of Portland, Oregon and Karin Payson Architects + Design of San Francisco.

Q. Will the amount of books increase?

A. The materials (books, CDs, DVDs, videos, books on tape, etc.) collection will remain the same. However, materials may be easier to find on new shelves in an improved layout. The addition of space will go for increased accessibility and new restrooms.

Q. What happens to the existing furniture?

A. Some historic pieces may be restored, but most of the furniture will be replaced. The Library has developed interior design guidelines to help the architects and staff choose appropriate furniture based on functionality, ergonomics, durability, maintenance, flexibility, sustainability, as well as the architectural period.

Q. Is the community involved in the design process?

A. Yes. A survey was conducted in September/October 2003, where 598 people gave their opinion about materials, facilities, and services at the branch. Two community meetings were held at the branch to discuss conceptual designs (November 2003 & April 2004). Before the plans are finalized, the Library Commission will hold a public Peer Review where an independent architect, planner or historic preservationist, and an interior designer review the design. Then the architects will go back to the community to discuss the final plans.

Q. Where does the money come from to renovate the branch?

A. In November 2000, the voters overwhelmingly passed a bond measure for \$106 million to upgrade San Francisco's branch library system. The bond's priorities are to reduce seismic risk, meet modern technological needs and current code requirements, comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and provide spaces that are responsive to current services, yet flexible enough to meet future needs. In addition, while the bond pays for a significant portion of the costs, it does not pay for furniture, fixtures, and equipment. The Friends of the San Francisco Public Library will raise \$16 million from private donations to pay for these costs. Call (415) 437-4859 to help with the Friends campaign.

Q. How much does construction cost for the West Portal Branch?

A. The project has a construction budget of \$2.7 million to renovate and expand the existing building.

Q. How do I find out more information about my branch renovation?

A. Contact the Branch Library Improvement Program at (415) 557-4354, check www.sfpl.org, or email BLIP@sfpl.org.