



AFTER YEARS OF DELAY, SF BEGINS CONSTRUCTION OF ONCE-CONTROVERSIAL NORTH BEACH LIBRARY

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

More than two years ago, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors controversially blocked landmark status for Appleton & Wolfard's mid-century North Beach library, in favor of erecting a new facility, to be designed by local firm Leddy Maytum Stacy (LMS). Late last year, the project, which is one of the final pieces of the San Francisco Public Library's Branch Library Improvement Program, finally got the go-ahead. Construction is now under way.

"It's been quite a process," remarked LMS principal Marsha Maytum. "We're happy to finally see shovels in the ground."

LMS's design for the two-story library provides 60 percent more space than the Appleton & Wolfard building did and emphasizes natural lighting through clerestory windows and sawtooth skylights. Large corner windows open up views to surrounding parks, the Transamerica Pyramid, and passing cable cars.

"We want the building to be light and airy, like a pavilion in the park," said Maytum.

The firm also created a master plan for the block, relocating the library to the corner site of a former parking lot and reclaiming its former site as open space. The firm emphasized connecting the library to this surrounding recreational space, which was largely

paid for through a new city bond measure, and moved a children's play area away from a busy street.

The \$105 million Branch Library Improvement Program calls for 16 branches to be renovated, four to be replaced with city-owned buildings, and three branches, including North Beach, to be replaced with new buildings. The program also sponsored the construction of the new Mission Bay branch, the city's first new branch in 40 years.

Earlier acrimony that flared over the project appears to

have fizzled.

"I'm not sure there is much of a controversy left," said HRC president Charles Edwin Chase. "I really haven't heard much about it, frankly... There is certainly the sense that there was a loss in terms of the building itself. But from a community perspective I think the new library will provide the kind of services that are necessary." **SL**

Elevation of new library and context of new library (top); renderings of the interiors (bottom).

