

Dear Member of the Chinatown / Him Mark Lai Branch Community,

We're writing to share an update on the status of the Chinatown / Him Mark Lai Branch Library Renovation. This historical Carnegie branch of San Francisco Public Library opened in 1921. The Branch was seismically retrofitted and expanded to twice its original size in the mid-1990s. It is now time to replace aging mechanical systems and renovate the building to better meet the needs of the Chinatown community in the 21st Century.

In 2018, the Library and Public Works published the **2018 Branch Capital Projects Feasibility Study**, which outlines existing needs, potential scope, and cost of the renovation of the Chinatown / Him Mark Lai Branch, the Mission Branch, and the Ocean View Branch – none of which were included in the recent Branch Library Improvement Program. The study also explores library service possibilities for these three branches, built upon these guiding principles:

- Libraries for the 21st Century
- Flexible and Adaptable Building Designs
- Preservation of Historic Carnegie Libraries
- Multifunctional Community Program Areas
- Transparency and Ease of Wayfinding

In June 2019, the Library began the renovation process by convening meetings where community members could meet architects from Public Works and Library staff to share their ideas for improving the Chinatown Branch. The presentations and the minutes of these meetings can be found here:

June 15, 18, & 24, 2019

[Chinese flyer \(PDF\)](#) | [English flyer \(PDF\)](#)

[Chinese Presentation \(PDF\)](#) | [English Presentation \(PDF\)](#)

[Chinese Minutes \(PDF\)](#) | [English Minutes \(PDF\)](#)

Those meetings informed the following specific goals for the renovation of the Chinatown / Him Mark Lai Branch Library:

- Ensure ample seating and spaces dedicated for adults, seniors, teens and children
- Maintain a community meeting room and improve space for library classes and programs
- Improve layout of the building with an increased focus on adaptable shared public spaces
- Restore the historic Carnegie Reading Room
- Replace aging mechanical systems to meet current environmental standards
- Improve building systems to enable the library to serve as a public respite space from heat waves and poor air quality
- Maintain the building's historic façade
- Improve accessibility and ease of travel between floors within the branch
- Expand access to technology: computers, printers and high-speed internet

While this type of significant renovation of the Chinatown / Him Mark Lai Branch Library would require the closure of the branch for a period of roughly two years, it is the Library's intention to continue to provide temporary Library services at a yet-to-be-determined alternate site in the Chinatown Community.

Prior to the COVID19 Emergency, the Library and Public Works had projected the budget for the renovation of the three-floor, 18,000-square-foot Chinatown / Him Mark Lai Branch Library at \$29.4M. In Fiscal Year 2021, this building project was paused due to the COVID19 emergency and budget constraints, however the project remains a priority for San Francisco Public Library and we are committed to resuming design work as soon as possible.

As the COVID19 emergency limits our ability to host in-person community meetings, we are writing today both to share information about the steps the Library and Public Works have taken so far toward the renovation of the Chinatown / Him Mark Lai Branch Library and also to re-engage the community in sharing your thoughts about this important project!

We greatly appreciate your participation in the survey below, which will help to inform us of the priority of the Chinatown / Him Mark Lai Branch Library renovation compared with other projects in the Chinatown community as we emerge from the COVID19 emergency.

Survey Link English

Survey Link Chinese

We thank the community for your continued support of the Chinatown / Him Mark Lai Branch of the San Francisco Public Library and look forward to the renovation of your branch library!

<https://sfpl.org/about-us/capital-projects-building-you/library-improvements-tomorrow/chinatown-him-mark-lai>