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MEETING NOTES

SUBJECT: Chinatown Branch Library Community Meeting
MEETINGS: June 15, 2019, 11:00 am & 1:00 pm
June 18, 2019, 7:00 pm
NOTES: June 24, 2019
LOCATION: Chinatown – Him Mark Lai Branch Library, Community Room

AGENDA

- Welcome by Library District Manager, Terry Carlson
- Project need and Guiding Principles by Public Works Architect, Andy Sohn
- Questions and Discussion by Library Chief of Branches, Cathy Delneo

Welcome Remarks and Introductions – Terry Carlson

- The Chinatown Branch was built in 1921, and was seismically retrofitted in 1996. Along with the Mission and Ocean View Branches, it was not part of the Branch Library Improvement Program (BLIP) – a voter passed bond measure to upgrade San Francisco’s branch library system.
- A Branch Capital Projects Feasibility Study was created in 2017 for the Chinatown, Mission and Ocean View Branches. \$29.4M has been allocated for the Chinatown renovation.
- Terry introduced Cathy Delneo (Chief of Branches), Roberto Lombardi (Facilities Director) and Andy Sohn (architect at Public Works, Building Design and Construction) to the 15 or more community members that were in attendance at each meeting.
- Community input is needed by the Library, and attendees were encouraged to voice their suggestions and opinions.

Project Need and Guiding Principles – Andy Sohn

- Library service and patron needs have changed dramatically since the Chinatown Branch was renovated in 1996. Updates to the building are necessary to keep pace with these changes.
- The areas of improvement to the existing branch is informed by the Guiding Principles established in the 2017 Feasibility Study:
 - Service and patron engagement for the library of the 21st century
 - Designs that enable flexibility and adaptability
 - Provide multifunctional community program areas
 - Transparency and ease of wayfinding
 - Preservation of historic reading rooms
- **Q:** *Can you expand on co-location?*
A: (Public Works) – Combined City services in one location.
(Library) – Appropriate services are determined through site-specific analysis. Examples of combined services include the senior center at the Mission Bay Branch,

and HASAs (Health and Safety Associates providing support and resources to patrons experiencing homelessness) at the Main and some branches.

Questions and Discussion – Cathy Delneo

1) What is special about Chinatown?

- **Q:** *What is the purpose of the question?*
A: (Library) - Hearing directly from community members what they like about their neighborhood gives the Library and the Public Works team an idea of the values the community shares.
- *San Francisco's Chinatown is unique – it is among the top three largest Chinese communities in the nation. It is one of the last neighborhoods in San Francisco to be gentrified, where Chinese culture, history, architecture, and language are preserved. It is a good place for children and teens to learn about their Chinese heritage.*
- *It is a lively, bustling, close-knit community of all ages – you see and interact with friends and neighbors everyday. There is no problem communicating and getting help in your own language.*
- *It is conveniently located. There is easy access to food, shopping, transportation, and cultural events.*

2) What do you like most about Chinatown Branch?

Staff

- *Helpful and patient staff*
- *Bilingual staff*

Building

- *Historic exterior and staircase*
(Library) – The exterior will remain the same, only the interior will change.
(Library) – The branch is a Carnegie library, and because of its historic significance, the exterior must stay the same.
- *The skylight and having natural light in the adult reading room*
- *Convenient location – easy to walk to or take a bus to the branch*
- *Open seven days a week and in the evening*
(Library) – All branch libraries are open 50 to 55 hours per week.

Collections

- *Large Asian interest collection, books, periodicals and DVDs in Chinese, hard to find books, banned books from Hong Kong*
- *Process for placing books on hold*

Programs

- *Children's storytime*
- *Free programs for children and teens*
- *Computer and technology learning classes for seniors*
- *Free programs for adults: book club, tai chi, movie nights*

3) What do you need or would you change in the branch?

Services

- *Services for seniors: access to senior support counselors and social workers, assistance with senior housing, help with applying for citizenship*
- *Dedicated computer helper*
- *Provide deaf services during classes and programs*
- *Improved computers: larger computer monitors for seniors, laptops that are smaller and easier to use, more iPads*
- *More books, especially books in Chinese and on the history of Chinatown and the Chinatown Branch*

Programs

- *More programs for seniors: computer learning and exercise (yoga, tai chi, Chinese dance) classes*
- *Community suppers, and cooking classes featuring foods from other cultures*
- *Arts classes: music, drawing, printing*
- *Daily Storytimes and longer playtimes*
- *Simultaneous broadcast of programs at the Main and other branches*
- *More programs and free tutoring for teens*
- *Movie club*

Building

- *Branch is crowded, not enough seats, computers, bathrooms, water fountains, space for books - need a bigger branch, need to expand, possibly add more floors*
(Library) – It won't be possible to build out, but it is possible to make the branch feel bigger by using the existing space more effectively.
- *Using the stairs is difficult for seniors – need a better elevator*
- *Quiet study rooms, as well as a space that allows for higher noise levels for socializing and studying.*
- *Dedicated space for teens where they can be loud and gather, use computers, and not disturb other library users*
- *Bigger storytime room*
- *Flexible, multifunctional program room that can be used in different ways*
- *Utilize the roof: teaching garden , outdoor program space, area to sit and socialize*
- *Building can get stuffy – need to Improve air conditioning and ventilation*
(Library) – Branch renovations will focus on resiliency and act as cooling and smoke relief centers.
(Library) – The renovated branch will have an improved HVAC system and smoke filtration for bad air quality days.
- **Q:** *Will there be further seismic improvements?*
A: (Library) – Yes, to some degree, and we will be removing the mezzanine.
- **Q:** *Have we considered LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standard?*
A: (Library) – Yes, the Library will strive for sustainable building design. We have photoelectric cells now.
- *Views of the city*

Access and Parking

- *Underground parking garage*

- *Walking to the branch can be difficult for some people – would like shuttle or paratransit services*

Temporary Library Services

(Library) – During the renovation, the library will have a temporary location. Please share ideas for temporary sites.

- *Possible locations: City College Chinatown Campus, recreation building in the Who Hei Yuen playground next door, vacant retail spaces on Polk Street*
- *Maintain same level of service: bilingual staff, computer classes, Chinese language materials, water fountain*

(Library) - There will be Chinese language materials at the temporary site.

Final Comments

- *We come to the library not only to borrow books, but come here because it is a place for learning, and gives the community a venue where they can engage in free speech without censorship or government control.*

(Library) – The American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights expresses that libraries are places where everyone has free access to ideas, while protecting their privacy.

- **Q:** *Can the community tour the building so we know what space we have to work with?*

A: ACTION (Library)– Yes! We can schedule a tour of the behind-the-scenes areas of the branch. We can also set up armchair tours of other libraries.

(Library) – There are modern libraries in other countries with innovative designs. If you’ve seen or heard of any great ideas, please share them with us, not just at today’s meeting, but anytime.

- *We loved the opportunity to provide input.*
- *Please provide usefulness over style.*
- **NEXT STEPS** - Present the preliminary designs to the public in the Spring of 2020.