

## **Eureka Valley Branch Library Community Meeting**

**December 14, 2016**

**Eureka Valley Branch Library**

**6:00-7:30 PM**

### **Hosts**

**San Francisco Public Library: Cathy Delneo, Chief of Branches; Rebecca Alcala-Veraflor, Central District Manager; Anne Vannucchi, Branch Manager**

**Department of Public Works Guest Presenter- Jasmine Kaw**

**Department of Public Works Guest Attendees- Ruby Yu, Julia Groat, Jasmine Kaw, Julia Laue, and Sandra Zuniga**

### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Cathy Delneo, Chief of Branches SFPL

Introduction of SFPL and DPW staff and Sandra Zuniga from Mayor's Office

The focus of tonight's meeting is to present the proposed design and gather feedback. We scheduled this meeting in response to feedback that some community members weren't able to attend the meeting we hosted on October 26, 2016. This meeting will include the same proposal presented at that meeting.

We're really glad to see such a large number of neighbors gathered this evening, and we're eager to hear your feedback on the plan.

We have spent a lot of time gathering feedback from the community around Eureka Valley Branch. We met 9 times to hear community concerns and to discuss ideas for resolving those concerns last fiscal year. We're very appreciative of the active engagement of the community.

To provide information on the process we used to gather community feedback, we met with community members on a regular, ongoing basis. The group dedicated specific meetings to topics such as lighting, landscaping, and the parking lot. During our meetings, people shared problems and solutions. Ultimately, the entire group ranked the problems and solutions. The Library then ranked the problem/solution pairs in terms of actionable, possible, or not actionable, and shared our responses with the community.

As we discussed at our earlier community meetings, the Library requested funding for this project for FY 17, which began on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Once the resources were available to support our partnership with DPW, we developed these plans.

We are on-track with our anticipated timeline for developing and implementing the improvements.

**Site accomplishments:**

Cathy Delneo, Chief of Branches SFPL

Since the Library began meeting with community members, we have made these steps toward increasing public safety at the library, both during open hours and when the library is closed:

- Removed ficus trees on Pond Street, which increased light to the parking lot.
- Widened sidewalk on Pond Street, improving access for community members.
- Installed security cameras inside branch near restroom and outside in parking lot for use in case of incidents.
- Repaired and moved electrical box on property, resolving repeated vandalism issue.
- Increased height and style of fencing adjacent to branch and eliminated inappropriate roof access after-hours.
- Eliminated availability to access electrical outlet on the roof.
- Installed a needle receptacle on the grounds partnership with the SF AIDS Foundation.
- Added power washing of the parking lot and exterior in partnership with DPW.
- Added a Supervisor position to the Eureka Valley staff, increasing support for staff responsiveness to Code of Conduct Violations.
- Added custodial support to the branch.
- Increased Security support to the branch during afternoon hours.
- Added a Health and Safety Associate at the branch twice weekly as part of the Library's work order with SF HOT.
- Hosted community clean-up effort in partnership with Sandra Zuniga at DPW.
- Continued Rec/Park contract for grounds maintenance.

**Proposed landscape improvement:**

**Jasmin Kaw, Department of Public Works**

10-15 minutes dedicated to going over the design plans.

The Library has worked with DPW to develop a landscaping plan, and, as promised, are bringing the plans to you tonight for feedback.

Physical component of the landscaping is one piece of the overall improvements to the site.

Our goal with landscaping is in such a way that it promotes appropriate use of the Eureka Branch Library grounds.

We also want the landscaping to be conceptually pleasing and appropriate for the entire community.

Jasmin hopes the physical improvements she and her design team have recommended will help the community to use the Library grounds appropriately.

The proposed landscape improvement is only a high-level conceptual plan at this point, we will gather your feedback before getting the approval for the actual work to take place.

Jasmin then walked us through the proposed landscaping plan she and her team at DPW developed in conjunction with SFPL staff.

**Prosper Street side of property:**

- Cobbled paving
- Large undulating landforms in planting area of various sizes
- Ornamental railing, 16-18 inches in height, to define border of planting and paving area
- Low ground level coverage along slopes for better visibility
- Pruning trees
- Evaluate whether the fixtures are appropriate for the neighborhood. Any decision would be informed by the feedback we have received from the community and what their needs are.

**16<sup>th</sup> Street Frontage of property:**

- Cobbled paving
- Landforms in planting areas
- Ornamental railing, 16-18 inches in height, to define border of planting and paving area
- Large, sturdy plantings interspersed with landforms to soften façade and create a visually interesting frame for the building. Plantings would be visible by patrons looking out through the windows of the Branch.
- Removal of the bicycle rack from this side of the property.
- No lawn or turf on this side of the property.
- Improve pedestrian safety by:
  - Removing the step-like aspect from the parking lot side of the brick plaza and eliminating pedestrian tendency to walk into the parking lot from the back of the plaza

- Broadening the driveway to provide increased visibility and clearance for patrons and delivery drivers
- More clearly delineating the pedestrian spaces from the parking lot spaces
- Rumble strip design could help slow drivers as they enter the parking lot

#### **Plaza and parking lot on the corner of 16<sup>th</sup> and Pond Streets:**

- Engage the plaza space from the corner
- Orient the plaza to the street will increase visibility for law enforcement and Library Security
- Remove ground-level plantings in the plaza
- Add raised planters
- Add an ornamental railing to limit inappropriate access to planting areas
- Plant hardy ornamentals
- Add benches with defined seating areas
- Relocate bicycle rack:
  - Increase appropriate use of the plaza area by all community members
  - Provide adequate light to bike parking
  - Increase number of bike parking spots
- Existing light and trees will remain
- Cobblestone pavers similar to those elsewhere in the landscaping plan will be placed under the eaves of the building while maintaining sidewalk texture adjacent to book drop.

#### **Back courtyard and garden**

- Leave existing fencing at perimeter of garden in place
- Evaluate light fixtures
- Hard groundcover planting
- Retain benches or replace with style of benches used in plaza
- Remove overgrown, existing plantings to increase visibility from the street and promote better SFPD patrol of area
- Evaluate large trees and shrubs on property line, possible replacement with other plantings, which would be done in consultation with neighboring lot owner
- Ornamental railing at perimeter of brick courtyard to
  - Define appropriate sitting space for community members during open hours
  - Increase ability for use in programs and by children and caregivers

#### **Questions/ Feedback**

Q: Will the cobble be permeable?

A: No, it will be mortared down.

Q: Is the cobble conforming to a plane or undulating?

A: The top of the depicted cobbled surface rises above ground level. In the driveway, it would be about 1" - 1.5" high in the driveway. In the planting strip on 16<sup>th</sup> Street, it would be a combination of rough and smooth rocks and have more varied height than in the driveway. More like a river rock, and varying from 4-6". On the Prosper Street side, it would be a more dramatic undulation, and potentially even larger rocks.

Q: Why is there a still a sidewalk near the bookdrop instead of cobblestone?

A: This will be left concrete to maintain ADA access path to that bookdrop for library patrons. Areas that are not part of the pedestrian walk way will have strips of cobble to promote appropriate use of space.

Q: Could there be lower lights in the courtyard?

A: Yes, we could look into that.

Q: Could there be lower lights on prosper street?

A: That's not advisable.

Q: What's the budget for this project?

A: The Library budgeted \$100,000 for these improvements this Fiscal Year. The plan as drawn by DPW staff exceeds that budget significantly. We could look for existing funding to bridge some or all of that gap based on the finalized plans. Given the scope of the project and our desire to respond quickly to community feedback, we might want to consider this as a phased, multiyear project. Prioritize where we want to focus the area, for example on the front courtyard.

Q: Can we close or fence off the planting area on 16<sup>th</sup> and Pond Street area? My concern is that many people are camping there, which isn't an appropriate activity. Closing it off would reduce the area of sleeping ground.

A: We want this to be safe and welcoming and to promote behaviors appropriate to the Library and the neighborhood. For a safety perspective, fencing can make it hard for law enforcement to see whether inappropriate activities are going on. That informed our recommendation to replace the existing soft plantings with cobblestones and hardy ornamental plants.

Q: Could we remove the plaza entirely? It isn't being used appropriately, and the feeling from neighbors is that it is only used by people who are using it inappropriately. If we can't remove it, could we fill it completely with potted plants? It doesn't seem to serve a function anymore.

A: The plaza is dedicated to Jose Sarria but we need to look further into the specific dedication and agreed upon use of the plaza.

Q: Any open spaces will invite people to camp there. Can we reduce the area of the plaza and add more paved parking spaces?

A: We'll look further into the plaza and any limitations that may exist in how we can approach this space. We'll bear in mind that feedback tonight is that you'd like to see the plaza space decreased.

One thing to bear in mind is that we already see some inappropriate uses of the parking area, and we want to be sure that the space is easy for law enforcement to see so they can address any concerning activities.

Q: Is there a change of using the parking lot for City car share?

A: That might be possible, but we need to bear in mind that the lot is used heavily by community members now to access the branch library. We don't want to eliminate access to library services by people who need to drive to get here, such as people with limited mobility.

Q: The front door of the library is inappropriately used during closed hours. Could we gate it off entirely?

A: The feedback that we heard from the series of community meetings we've held is that the wider community is not interested a high gate around the branch. This approach would be costly and would not necessarily resolve the problems people wish to resolve. The Library's Police Sgt, Sgt. Loya, who used to police this very area, has indicated that he is not in favor of fencing at this location. He found that the fencing at the other end of Pond Street at the DPH building didn't prevent people from getting into the courtyard and made it tougher for SFPD to remove people from the property. From a Custodial perspective, it is difficult to maintain the space if one has to go behind the fence to remove trash that blows in. Fences can also be used to locations to affix tarps, and can actually increase some of the inappropriate after-hours behaviors neighbors are reporting.

For these reasons, the Library is not looking to alter the façade of the existing building at this point with the installation of an entrance gate or high perimeter fencing around the building.

We are interested in increasing visibility and maintaining the feeling that the library is free and open to all community members. Our main priority is in establishing sight lines for law enforcement and in developing a landscape that ensures sidewalk access and promotes a safe and welcoming library facility.

We could consider removing the large planter that's near the main entrance and further trimming/removing the tree near the door to make the area open and less of a hidden spot.

Q: Do we need to have benches in the plaza area? They seem like they encourage people to hang out, and that's part of the problem after-hours.

A: 9 community members liked this idea.

From the Library perspective, our community in this neighborhood include peoples how don't live in homes. They are our users and a part of our community and we want them to feel welcome to use our services and grounds appropriately.

We had put the benches with defined seating areas into the plan because we had heard at our meetings that people wanted a neighborhood spot to hang out and have a coffee and chat with other community members. We can look at that assumption more carefully though, in light of tonight's feedback.

Q: If we made the entrance more open it could be more attractive and welcoming. I like the designs and could see that the landforms are more extreme than I originally thought. My real concern is that no matter how hardy plants are, they attract trash and needles. If we don't have an onsite gardener, it will require more staff time to maintain. I like the idea of phasing in changes. How is Dolores Park responding? Could we use some of what they've learned here?

A: The ground cover we have currently is mulch, which is tough to maintain. By removing the mulch, we are hoping to make it easier for the gardeners from Rec/Park to maintain during their regularly scheduled visits. For that same reason, we are looking at using plants that require much less maintenance than the mulch that's currently in place. The majority of the surfaces along the sidewalk will be cobble and mortar, which is easier for Custodians to clean up with grabbers and hoses. We do want to find the right kind of planting. A phased approach does seem like it could work here.

Q: On Prosper Street could there be larger plants? It would look nicer for neighbors who look out of their front windows onto the library.

A: Due to the narrow space we likely could not add larger planting. It's off the beaten path so it is a destination. Work on this side of the building might trigger a need to look at those trees more closely, as the sidewalk is extremely narrow. It may be required to widen this sidewalk.

Q: The first meeting we had about these concerns was with Supervisor Weiner, SFPD, and library. The motivation for that meeting was to address the issues happening outside of the library, primarily during closed hours. We've been meeting in our community groups and have been thinking about the priorities. The group I've met with wants to return to the priority of the needs. Multiyear approach: let's start with eliminating some of attraction of the library property for inappropriate uses by installing the hardscape and etc. It sets us up for the next phase. We feel some of the plans will make space more attractive. 2. The next phase should include the more attractive spaces. Community member says the aesthetics are not a high priority and should not be considered when developing a plan.

A: The Library is responding to what is within our purview. We are responding to what the community has requested and are working with our neighbors and partner agencies. No amount of landscaping can solve some of the bigger issues facing the City as a whole, but we can do our part to make the space easier to maintain and to ensure that good sightlines are present.

The fit of the branch library within the community and the message that we send to people who use our services is very important to the Library. Aesthetics do have an impact on bringing people in to use our services, and we do feel that this neighborhood deserves an attractive, safe, and welcoming branch library.

Q: How do the staff feel about the landscaping and parking lot?

A: The Branch Manager reported that the parking lot is important for families, elderly community members, and people with disabilities. She reports that she doesn't often see library patrons using the plaza area. A community member said that on Sundays, the plaza is used by people from the community.

Q: Could the community take ownership of maintaining the plants in the plaza on 16<sup>th</sup> and Pond Street?

A: That seems like something we can explore.

Q: Community member, if you have an open space then people will use it. Can the people who represent that speak to that?

A: The Library can reach out to our partner organizations to speak to that on a different day to discuss. The HOT team does good work serving the community here outside of the branch. The branch also has a Health and Safety Associate here at the branch twice a week. We have found that not everyone is ready to use all of the resources available to them, and there may not be housing available to everyone right now.

Q: Community member shared an image of paving. Can we consider that type of paving?

A: This can be considered.

Q: Multiphase approach sounds great but not sure if low ornamental rail will work. Could it be retrofitted if we wanted to make the fencing higher?

A: That may be possible, but there would likely be a prohibitive cost to scalable fencing.

Q: We should increase the height of the fence and remove the trees on Prosper Street.

A: As we look closer we may need to make changes to the trees. We want a safe sidewalk for everyone.



Q: Community member, there aren't enough eyes in the neighborhood and we should have a plan that's physically defensive.

Community member, the back courtyard could create more problems if we lower the back garden fence like it seems to be shown on the plans. It could become a hospitable place to camp out. He likes the way it is now.

A: We aren't planning to change the fence height, DPW staff will fix the landscape plans to reflect the actual height of the fence for the back garden.

The green in the landscape plan reflects a low ground cover for visibility but not a lawn. We hear the concerns that a grassy lawn could promote inappropriate after-hours access of the back garden, and we planned accordingly with low shrubbery-like ground cover.

The District Manager will check with PD to see if they have a key to the back garden and courtyard.

Q: Community member SF State open visible spaces, lighting up the area, and clear lines of sight. Could we also consider motion detector lights are a deterrent?

A: Yes, we could consider motion-activated lights.

Q: The entrance of the library is really is a big draw for inappropriate camping after-hours.

A: Lighting can be a part of solutions we develop to address the entrance.

The meeting adjourned at 8 pm.

Notes respectfully submitted by Rebecca Alcala-Veraflor, Central District Manager.