



Council Agenda Report

FROM: Inga Waite, Library & Museums Director

SUBJECT: Receive Library Facility Feasibility Study Report, and Refer the Report to City Staff to Consider Within the Framework of City-wide Future Capital Improvement Planning (Not a Project Under CEQA per Article 20, Section 15378 and Under General Rule Article 5, Section 15061)

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council receive the Library Facility Feasibility Study report, and refer the report to City staff to consider within the framework of City-wide future capital improvement planning.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The City Council revisited its list of priorities in a workshop on September 23, 2020. "City facilities and infrastructure" continues to be the third highest priority on its list.

This action supports two of the City Council's value drivers: "Working to improve the quality of life of our residents" and "Appropriately preserve, promote, and maintain our historic, cultural and environmental assets." Monterey Public Library is resource which contributes to the quality of life of our community. It is a highly valued asset and the City Council is committed to supporting plans that ensure adequate provision of library services into the future.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

There is no cost associated with receiving this report and referring it to staff to consider within future capital improvement planning.

The estimated costs of library facility renovation and improvement strategies described in the report range from \$12 million to \$48 million.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

The City of Monterey determined that the proposed action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)(CCR, Title 14, Chapter 3 ("CEQA Guidelines), Article 20, Section 15378). In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 includes the general rule that CEQA applies only to activities which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Because the proposed action and this matter have no potential to cause any effect on the environment, or because it falls within a category of activities excluded as projects pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378, this matter is not a project. Because the matter does not cause a direct or any reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change on or in the environment,

this matter is not a project. Any subsequent discretionary projects resulting from this action will be assessed for CEQA applicability.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

The City Council could direct staff to explore additional facility options not included in the report.

DISCUSSION:

Background

The Monterey Public Library has been a vital community partner for more than 171 years, both providing quality service and serving as a repository for community history. As the first public library established in California, it set an early standard for library services in our State. The current building located at 625 Pacific Street was constructed in 1952. A study of City facilities in 2007 identified over \$3.5 million in deferred capital maintenance needs. Since 2007 some \$982,000 has been expended in Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Neighborhood and Community Improvement Program (NCIP) funds for a roof replacement in 2016, ADA and safety upgrades, terrace repairs, and enhancements including a quiet study room and a kitchen addition.

The Library continues to be a well-loved, busy public facility. In 2018-19 the Library welcomed 261,843 visitors, and circulated over 410,000 books, DVDs, audio books and electronic resources. The Library offered 741 programs for all ages and attendance by adults was up by 13%. Even now, during shelter in place, an average of 200 community members borrow over 450 items per day through Sidewalk Service, and more than 40 customers call or email questions daily. Deferred capital maintenance and heavy library use over the past 68 years has taken its toll on the condition of the facility.

On April 26, 2016 the Library Board of Trustees adopted Strategic Priorities for 2017 – 2019. One of the priorities was to “develop plans for facility improvements and/or expansion.” A Library Facility Master Plan had been adopted by the City Council in 2001, but staff and trustees recognized that the plan would need to be reviewed and updated to correspond to changes in library service delivery and the community’s current and future facility and service needs. On August 7, 2018 City Council released \$116,622 in Library Capital Facilities Reserves to fund a Library facility feasibility study.

On January 7, 2019 the City initiated a Library Facility Feasibility Study to determine how Monterey Public Library should meet community needs of today through the next 20 years. For this work they commissioned Group 4 Architecture, Research + Planning, Inc., a firm with nationwide experience helping communities develop and implement plans for library service that reflect community values and industry best practices for service and design. Group 4 was tasked with engaging library staff, stakeholders and the community in a study that would result in a library facility renovation, remodel and expansion plan based on a 21st century library service delivery model, and which reflected our community’s priorities.

Process and Community Engagement

A Project Management Team was formed consisting of Library Board Chair Bob Petty, Trustee Jim Thomson, Library Director Inga Waite, Library Manager Kim Smith, and Public Works Associate Civil Engineer Max Rieser. The group met monthly with the consultants to track the progress of the project. Community feedback was a critical component of the study. A Library Project Team consisting of 17 participants from across the Monterey community – representing the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District, neighborhood associations, other City departments, parents, retirees, library volunteers, Naval Postgraduate School students, and other local organizations - met three times over the course of the study to provide input.

A community survey was conducted to learn about service and space allocation priorities. Over 380 participants responded online, and another 280 respondents provided feedback at in-person kiosks stationed at a variety of high-traffic indoor and outdoor community events. More than 50 adults and 40 teens shared their aspirations and concerns for the community in general and for library service in particular through staff-led focus groups structured on a conversation framework developed by the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation.

The City Manager, Community Development, Public Works and Finance Director were consulted at technical meetings, and two all Library staff meetings were held. Group 4 met with the full Board of Trustees twice, and on April 24, 2019 a joint-study session was held between the City Council and the Library Board to discuss renovation plan options and service priorities. A project schedule appears on page 41 of the Monterey Public Library Feasibility Study.

Facility Functionality

Apart from the facility maintenance needs identified in 2007, the study revealed that library functionality has become increasingly impaired as services, population, and community needs have evolved since 1952. Public space is limited to 23,000 square feet (SF) shared between a main floor and a mezzanine. A complicated floorplan, multiple entrances, and poorly-lit, cramped shelving areas present challenges for wayfinding, security, access, and use. Staff space is split between two floors causing staff inefficiencies.

Public feedback repeatedly mentioned crowding; competition for space between families with children, teens, and those seeking quiet spaces; and related noise conflicts as common challenges. The number of young adults who visit the Library after school far exceeds the Teen Zone's capacity. Library spaces for collaboration and creation are squeezed into inadequate, uninviting areas. The Library's unique and treasured local history collections and archives have outgrown the climate-controlled space provided in the California History Room. Further, the California History Room is difficult to find and lacks adequate space both for visitors to conduct research and for staff to process collections. WiFi signals are impaired by the thick concrete structure. In brief, there is a shortage of space to adequately accommodate community needs and staff efficiency. The facility is in need of renovation to update interior functionality and aesthetics.

Expansion Strategies

The study recommends a 26,000-square-foot Base Program, excluding the basement, as a minimum target for a renovated Monterey Public Library. The recommendation is based on analysis of the existing facility, current services and uses, best practices in contemporary library design, and community, stakeholder, and City engagement.

Recommendations

Four strategies (“levels”) were developed to explore current site and facility capacities for rehabilitation and expansion. The estimated cost of these strategies (in 2019 dollars) range from \$12 to \$48 million. A complete demolition and rebuild was considered, but taken off the table early on. The facility was designed by a William Wurster, prominent California architect. A 2012 City-commissioned historic survey confirmed that the building is eligible for local historic designation should the City wish to pursue it. The open floor plan lends itself easily to renovation, which would have hundreds of thousands of dollars in demolition costs, and community sentiment is strongly in favor of retaining the building. Any level of renovation would nevertheless disrupt library service, possibly resulting in the need for a temporary facility. Relocation to nearby sites was also considered, including opportunities to co-locate with other City functions.

The Library Board of Trustees reviewed facility expansion strategies vetted by members of community with the following criteria in mind:

- whether the strategy meets the established Base Program of enhanced library spaces and services;
- ability to serve Monterey community needs and aspirations for decades to come;
- cost-effectiveness and useful life;
- anticipated public support for the strategy;
- ability to secure ongoing, appropriate use of the current facility; and
- ability to secure funding and work in concert with City priorities.

Based on these considerations, the Library Board recommended a preferred strategy of a Level 3 Expansion, encompassing a 31,000 SF renovation and expansion of the Monterey Public Library at its current location. Secondary recommendations made by the Board are, in order: a Level 2 Enclosure of 3,000 SF of the east courtyard, satisfying the Base Program recommendations; and a Level 1 selective makeover of the Library within its current walls.

The Library Board recommended against the Level 4 expansion (36,000 SF) and the Lot C and Stokes Adobe offsite options. Phased options were also excluded from consideration. A project split into two or more phases would increase base cost by approximately 20% and would significantly disrupt library operations.

Final Report

At their meeting on August 28, 2019 the Library Board made a final determination regarding preferred program options and site alternatives. These recommendations were to be included in Group 4’s final report to be presented to City Council in December, 2019. A series of unanticipated events, from the fiscal emergency declaration in November 2019, proposed sales tax measure to be voted on in March, 2020, and then the Covid-19 health and fiscal crises delayed the process. The Library Board of Trustees gave their final approval to the revised report on August 24, 2020.

COVID-19 Delays

On March 13, the Library closed to the public as a precaution to reduce the potential spread of the novel coronavirus. Governor Newsom issued Executive Orders N-29-20 and N-33-20, which deemed “the frequency and length of public meetings will be minimized, and that “non-urgent and non-essential City business with expected public feedback will be postponed.” Group 4 was informed that the City Council presentation was postponed indefinitely. Seven months later virtual meetings have now become the norm, and there is no set end date for California’s current shelter-in-place health restrictions.

The City Manager, Library Board Chair and Vice-Chair agree that the presentation to the City Council should go forward. The Library Board of Trustees recognizes that, although the recommendations regarding spatial needs were developed prior to current physical distancing protocols, plans which address community concerns of overcrowding will be of benefit to our citizens in the future. While the library building is currently closed to visitors, health restrictions will eventually be lifted, and the role of the public library as physical gathering space for learning, inspiration, and discovery will resume.

Conclusion

The attached report is provided to the City Council for consideration and to refer to staff to consider within the framework of the City’s future capital improvement planning. The report describes how an improved library facility can address evolving community needs. Before a library facility project of any size can move forward, it will be necessary to prioritize library facility improvements within the framework of other City facility needs and limited funding sources.

A renovated and expanded Monterey Public Library will result in improved community services and programs that are operationally efficient and a building that is flexible and able to adapt to evolving community needs. The Monterey Public Library will be more accessible to all ages. Its role as a community hub will be enhanced and the facility will serve Monterey residents far into the future.

Attachment: 1. *Monterey Public Library Feasibility Study – Spring 2020*
2. Presentation Slide Deck

c: Library Board of Trustees
Library Project Team
Friends & Foundation Board of Directors

Writings distributed for discussion or consideration on this agenda item, pursuant to Government Code § 54957.5, are posted at <https://monterey.org/Submitted-Comments> within 72 hours of the meeting.