



REPORT to the MAYOR and MEMBERS of the CITY COUNCIL  
From the CITY MANAGER

DATE: July 25, 2023

SUBJECT: Report on the La Mesa Library Expansion Feasibility Study

ISSUING DEPARTMENT: CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

SUMMARY:

Issues:

Staff recommends that the City Council receive the Library Expansion Feasibility Study and consider providing policy direction to staff regarding next steps?

Recommendation:

Staff recommends the City Council receive the Library Expansion Feasibility Study and provide policy direction to staff regarding next steps.

Fiscal Impact:

The La Mesa Library Expansion Feasibility Study includes the analysis and feasibility of three design options for expanded library services that vary in cost. The fiscal impact to the City is dependent on which design option, if any, is pursued and available funding sources for the project.

City's Strategic Goals:

- Continue to improve high quality municipal services

BACKGROUND:

At the July 27, 2021 City Council meeting, the Council approved the formation of a Library Task Force for the purpose of reviewing options and recommending a method to expand the La Mesa Branch of the San Diego County Library (La Mesa Branch). At the meeting, City Council directed staff to create a Task Force to research options for

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expanding the La Mesa Branch commensurate to the community's size and needs and recommend a course of action to the City Council.

The Task Force began meeting in November 2021, and consisted of three at-large members and members from the San Diego County Library, Friends of the La Mesa Library, a faith-based/non-profit organization, and the education community. In its ensuing meetings, the Task Force received a presentation regarding the San Diego County Library's efforts, including needs analysis criteria and operational considerations based on current standards. Using this information, the Task Force discussed and drafted recommendations. The Task Force concluded its last meeting in February of 2022 by adopting formal recommendations for the City Council to consider. The recommendations were as follows:

1. Retain a qualified consultant to prepare a Library Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study as a course of action to evaluate the existing library facility, operations, growth potential, and funding options to expand the La Mesa Branch in a four to five-year timeframe. The Library Task Force recommended that the Facility Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study include the following components:
  - A. Evaluate overall capacity for children and teen programs, community programs, and space needs for public meetings, computer/printer usage, staff work, quiet study/reading area, and outdoor events.
  - B. Conduct community engagement that includes various segments of the La Mesa population including children, teens, and non-English speaking residents.
  - C. Utilize the Needs Assessment completed by the County of San Diego Library in 2020 as a resource and consult with the County of San Diego La Mesa Library to assess facility needs.
2. The Library Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study process would provide additional information regarding the optimum facility size to accommodate current and future growth of library programs and operations and estimate the potential development of two possible scenarios:
  - A. Expanding the current library by constructing a second-floor mezzanine and/or exploring options to expand into a portion of the existing post office space. Developing potential alternative configurations to the library floor plan to provide additional space for programs and services including the potential use of outdoor space.
  - B. In partnership with the County of San Diego, exploring the option of constructing a new library facility on the site identified in the 2016 Civic

Center Feasibility Study or an offsite location either as a public project or a public-private partnership.

Feasibility Study Elements:

- A. Identifying potential sources of funding including public financing, corporate and philanthropic grants, and public/private partnerships as well as discussing funding constraints and impediments.
  - B. Developing a financial feasibility analysis based on the two potential development scenarios.
3. Utilizing the results of the Library Needs Assessment and Financial Feasibility Study, the City Council would have the option to allocate funding for a potential future capital project and direct staff to retain a qualified architect and construction contractor to develop the preferred option.

At the March 22, 2022 City Council meeting, the City Council approved funding to contract with a consulting firm to prepare a Needs Assessment and Financial Feasibility Study (Study) for the La Mesa Branch. In April 2022, the City advertised a Request for Proposals (RFP 22-14) and Roesling Nakamura Terada Architects, Inc. (RNT) was selected as the most qualified consulting firm to perform the Study.

DISCUSSION:

In following with the Task Force recommendation and City Council direction, the scope of the Study included:

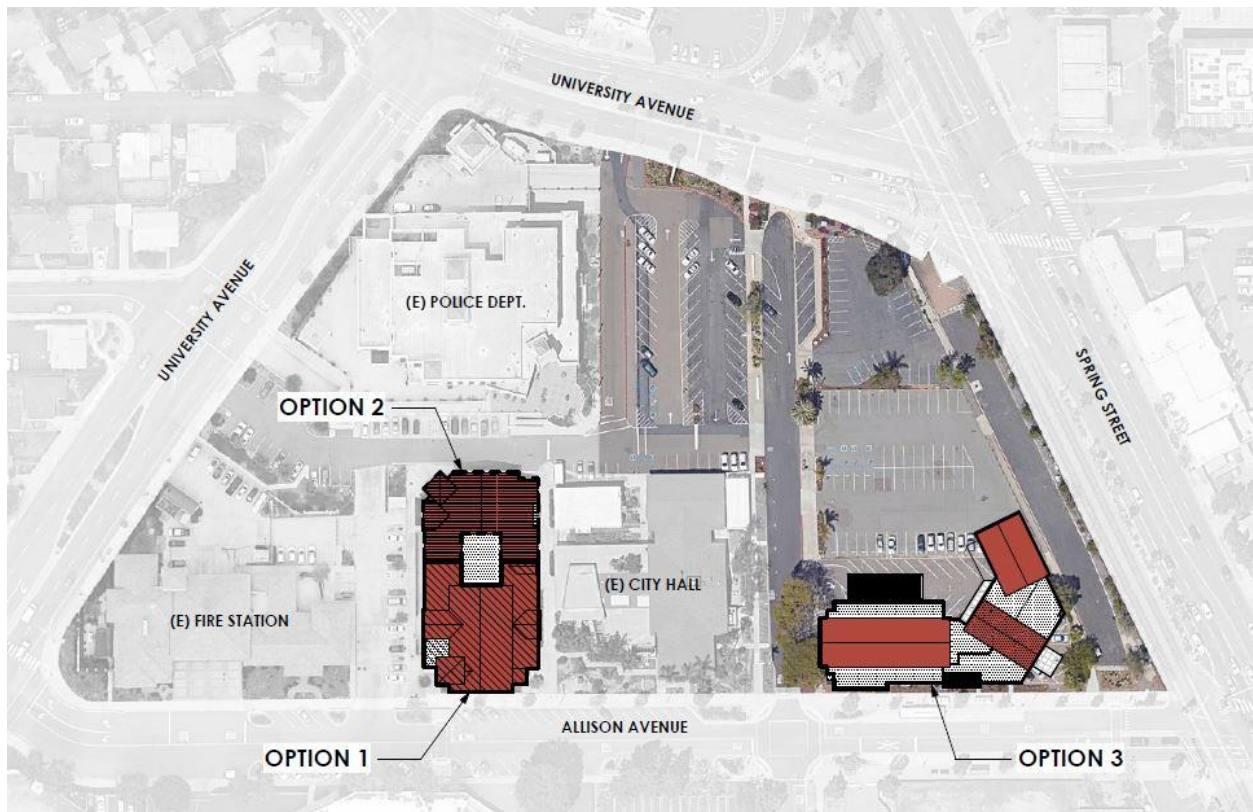
- Expansion of existing library facilities to include community spaces
- Improved adult's, children's, and staff spaces
- Reorganization of programs
- Increased square footage commensurate with the community's needs

To assist with the study, a scientifically valid survey of La Mesa residents was commissioned to seek input regarding the need for library amenities/facilities, services that are most important to provide, and programs residents currently use and value.

The Study considers three design options for remodel, expansion, or new construction to expand library services based off a 15,000 square foot library template from the San Diego County Library Master Plan, which was referenced in the Study to provide guidance for library renovation or new construction. Considerations were also based on the survey referenced above, library staff input, City input, and professional architectural judgements by RNT. The Study also identifies potential funding sources and

development scenarios such as collaborative opportunities with the County of San Diego, a public-private partnership, private donations, and the possibility of a bond measure. The Study is attached to this report as Attachment A for reference.

Below is an overview of the three-design options:



*(Above) The three design options presented in the La Mesa Library Feasibility Study*

**Option 1: Vertical Expansion** – This option adds a second level to the existing footprint of the library. With this option, a number of staff and service spaces remain functional, notably the location of the lobby and restrooms. The addition of an elevator and two separate egress stairs comes with the addition of the second floor. As a second-floor program space, a community room can have controlled access and acoustic separation from the main library. An exterior patio space is possible on the second floor as well. Further design for this option should consider the structural impacts of a second level on the existing framing and foundation. This design option results in a 16,176 square foot library at an estimated cost of \$7,285,157.

**Option 2: Horizontal Expansion** – This option expands the library into the existing and adjacent United States Postal Service (Post Office) office. As with option 1, a number of existing staff and service spaces are able to remain functional, but the lobby and restrooms are relocated to support the community room. The Post Office entrance is

utilized in this option and the existing library entrance is reassigned to an exit-only function. Further design for this option would need to consider impacts to the brace frame, particularly at the exterior poet's patio space, and potential structural solutions to removing existing columns throughout the Post Office to open the floor plan. Option 2 would require the Post Office to consent to relocation and a new location would need to be identified. This design option results in a 16,138 square foot library at an estimated cost of \$5,878,571. It is important to note that relocation costs associated with the Post Office are unknown and not factored into the cost estimate.

Option 3: New Building – This option includes the design and construction of a new library facility at the northwest corner of Allison Avenue and Spring Street. This location engages the existing transit hub and connects circulation with a breezeway lobby that can open and close with the operation hours of the library. The exterior patio spaces face inward to promote connection to the larger Civic Center area. This option could be designed with uses on top of the library, such as offices, apartments, or uses related to the Civic Center site. This design option results in a 16,444 square foot library at an estimated cost of \$13,842,645. The cost estimate only includes the library space, not any additional uses above.

**CONCLUSION:**

Staff recommends the City Council consider design options for expanded library services in the City of La Mesa and provide policy direction to staff on next steps. The preferred design option will likely have an impact on the next phase of the Civic Center revitalization. The relocation of the Post Office in Option 2 could be incorporated into a new Civic Center project . The location of Option 3 has been identified as a potential location for office space, housing and parking.

Reviewed by:



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Greg Humora  
City Manager

Respectfully submitted by:



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Amanda Lee  
Assistant City Manager



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Lyn Dedmon  
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Attachments: A. La Mesa Library Feasibility Study