

keep \$12 million already appropriated but transferred to other projects this spring. That's when a major meltdown at the Recreation & Park Department stalled 19 projects set to be funded by \$110 million in general obligation bonds, approved by the voters four years ago.

Supervisor Michela Alioto-Pier's office worked hard to persuade Rec

abled access, and upgrades for compliance with the building code. Other features are a large community room and smaller rooms for preschool activities and Arts & Crafts. The design includes a patio, a larger kitchen, more bathrooms, and expanded staff and storage space. The expansion adds wings to the north and west of the building, includ-

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## Controversial makeover proposed for Marina Library

By Sue Cauthen

Final design for the new Marina Branch library goes before the Library Commission August 19<sup>th</sup>.

While the \$3.9 million plan reflects community wishes in some particulars, it is based on San Francisco Public Library administrators' vision of a 21st-century library.

This vision sees libraries as meeting places, and uses merchandising techniques borrowed from the corporate world. It focuses on acquisition of computer-based information, ordering books online, and defining the role of librarians as "navigators of the Internet." By contrast, the new Seattle and San Jose libraries have been widely praised for maintaining a large book collection and blending it artfully with computer-based technology.

Financed by a \$106 million bond issue to modernize The City's branch library system, the Marina project acknowledges the community's wish for more books, but does not increase the present collection. It does, however, add about 200 feet of new shelf space. The plan incorporates the branch library's mandate to upgrade and strengthen the building at Chestnut and Webster in Moscone Playground. Otherwise, the design follows SFPL's original concept.

At a July neighborhood meeting to unveil the final plan for the library, architect Mark Schatz and library project manager Marilyn Thompson explained that the work includes seismic bracing, better access for the disabled, mechanical and electrical upgrades, and a dedicated space for teenagers, children and adults. There will be 14 more lounge chairs, and 10 more computers for a total of 16.

### Computers vs. Books

Not all patrons agree with this approach. "Why are there three times as many computers when people said they want more books?" asked Jean Chaitin, a member of the Cow Hollow Association. Since the Marina Branch is in an affluent neighborhood, she said, there is a good likelihood that many residents have computers at home.

Librarian David Dodd said that the new flat-screen computers take up less space than older models. There will also be new wiring to accommodate laptops.

The branch design calls for a 1000-square-foot expansion in front of the library, increasing total size to about

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### Library, continued from front page

7500 square feet. The new wing is on the west side of the front door and extends the library into the plaza. The plan requires removal of a 20-foot tree and the large circular planter fronting Chestnut Street, as well as a diseased plum tree in the patio. Schatz said they intend to add two new trees in back. There may be new planting in the plaza as well.

The new wing, a glassed-in browsing room, is a concession to the community's desire for more book space. This expansion, about one-third the size of the Moscone Recreation Center's basketball court, will house the new book collection, videotapes, DVDs, and CDs. It represents a compromise between the public's wish for more books – 78% of the patrons surveyed asked for them – and SFPL's desire to create a separate room for programs in every branch. Browsing room bookcases will be on casters and can be rolled aside to accommodate seating for programs.

Architect Schatz noted that the adult reading area is in the rear of the building to address patrons' request for a quiet space, separate from youth activities. He said, however, that the library would be more crowded because of the added features.

Librarians citywide have questioned SFPL's plan to locate so many activities in The City's 26 branches. At about 7000 sq. ft. each, they are relatively small facilities. "The buildings aren't big enough to be all things to all people," said one librarian. Others wonder if a preconceived one-size-fits-all approach considers the needs of San Francisco's diverse neighborhoods.

For example, about 75% of the Marina Branch's patrons are adults. Teen use is under 3% and children account for the remainder. Census figures show that only 2% of District 2 families have kids under 18. SFPL hopes to increase use by Marina Middle School students, while Supervisor Michela Alioto-Pier has been exploring methods to increase home ownership opportunities for Marina residents of child-rearing age, the majority of whom are renters.

### Construction Schedule

Construction at the Marina Branch is expected to overlap the \$8 million renovation of Moscone Recreation Center next door. Plans call for the library to close in spring 2005 and reopen in early 2007. Tentative starting date for the Rec Center work is fall 2005. Project manager Keith Kawamura said the job would take 12 to 14 months.

Since the Marina Branch is located on Rec & Park land, the two agencies are hoping to work out a cooperative arrangement for their projects. A plan to share the cost of soil testing stalled when the Moscone project was "defunded." Now the money has been restored and the makeover is moving forward. This means that there will be a large community room and two smaller activity rooms within a stone's throw of the library. Former City Librarian Susan Hildreth contemplated some kind of joint use arrangement for large library events.

SFPL's Marilyn Thompson is similarly seeking synergy and coordination. The clincher is that the library is on

land owned by Rec & Park, which must approve the library's plan. One reason for the library's expansion in front is that the Park Department and The City's master plan are skittish about building on usable green space. Another is that SFPL wants to showcase the library in an effort to increase patronage.

The Friends & Foundation of the Library are trying to raise about \$500,000 to buy furniture and computers for the new Marina facility. A "fifties" party is set for September 9<sup>th</sup> at the branch, which was built in 1953.

After the Library Commission greenlights the Marina plan, SFPL plans another community meeting, the fifth since fall 2002. This time there will be a new cast of characters.

Hildreth left her job in San Francisco last month and was set to become the city librarian in Tucson, Arizona. Instead, Governor Schwarzenegger appointed her state librarian, and she is now in Sacramento. The chief of branches and head financial officer have resigned, and the director of the Friends/Foundation took a library job in Chicago.

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