

Parkside Library to Close for Renovation

By Jonathan Farrell

The Parkside branch of the SF Public Library is an important center for the community. Built in 1951, it is among the busiest library branches in the City. It serves as a vital resource center and gathering place, and provides valuable educational and cultural programs for the neighborhood. But 50 years of wear and tear requires the building be seismically upgraded.

On Feb. 7, the branch will close for renovations. The closing marks the end of a long struggle by community organizers to urge the SF Library Commission to find additional funding for the branch when the city's budget fell short back in 2004.

When assistance from the California state budget was denied, then-Supervisor Fiona Ma and others rallied for appropriations from a reserve fund to help close the budget deficit.

Currently, the renovation and expansion of the Parkside Branch is estimated at \$3 million.

Thomas Hacker Architects of Portland, Oregon has teamed up with SF-based Karin Payson Architecture and Designs to take on the project. Both firms are well established and recognized for designing public buildings. The firm THA, Inc. will oversee the implementation of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. The U.S. Green Building Council has developed the ecological rating system.

Speaking on behalf of the library, public relations officer Michelle Jeffers said that in addition to seismic upgrades the Parkside Branch needs to catch up to technological advancements and comply with current Americans with Disabilities Act regulations. A new outside ramp will be provided for easier access.

"Both staff and public use areas will become more functional," Jeffers said.

The children's area will be redesigned to make more room for various programs, such as early childhood learning experiences, classroom visits for schools and expanded collections. Outreach to the primary and secondary

schools of the neighborhood is essential in helping students reach academic goals.

"These renovations are all part of the Branch Library Improvements Program bond measure passed by voters in 2000," said program administrator Mindy Linetzky.

She and city Librarian Luis Herrera, along with Brian Bannon, serving as chief administrator for all the branches, are pleased that the needed renovations are moving forward. Linetzky explained that the \$105.9 million bond measure calls for 16 branches to be renovated. Also, four library facilities currently being leased are to be replaced with city-owned buildings. Three branches will be replaced with new buildings, and the construction of the Mission Bay library will be the first new branch in more than 40 years.

Renovation of the Parkside branch also includes a 1,000-square-foot addition to be constructed on the east side of the building. The addition will provide space to offset new elements in other parts of the building as a result of the renovations.

"The branch intentionally chose to add on to the east side of the structure because this is non-programmable open space and was approved by the SF Recreation and Park Commission," Linetzky said.

Addressing concerns about the addition, Payson said: "The location of the addition is an area that is not usable as park space so it would have the least impact."

Plans for the branch include a 24-hour book return, express self-serve book check-out stations and more infrastructure to provide the latest in technologies and flexibility for the future, including wireless Internet access.

During the renovation, Parkside's Tuesday storytimes for children will be held at the Taraval Police Station, 2345 24th Ave. In addition, Bookmobile service will be provided at 1281 Santiago St., on Mondays and Wednesdays, from 1 to 5 p.m.

The renovated branch will re-open next year.